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# THE ART OF CRIME





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*By*

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PHILIP ALLAN

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TO  
J. B. H.



## FOREWORD

IN this book it has been my aim to assemble for the convenience of its readers a collection of instances of everyday crooked enterprise, and to present them with a picture of crime from the standpoint of its practitioners. In so doing, it is hoped that those who may be inclined to play the victim's part may realize the mentalities with which they have to contend, while those who are desirous of enlisting in the ranks of the profession may perceive the difficulties and drawbacks in their way, and the dangers against which they must be on their guard if they wish to succeed.

Personally I am inclined to the belief that it pays to be conventional and law-abiding in the long run, and I must candidly confess that there is much in the mental outlook and character of the crook proper which I dislike. To take advantage of human folly seems to me to be unkind, while to steal the belongings of others seems to me to be an ugly undertaking. But in a world favourable to the continuous existence of the ugly and the cruel, one should not be surprised nor unduly vexed at the presence of ugly deeds and unkind actions, being grateful rather for the unconventional acts of beauty and goodwill which flourish side by side, often in the same character, and which by their contrasts make life as a whole spiritual and wonderful.

ARTHUR R. L. GARDNER



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## INTRODUCING THE CROOK PROPER

THAT a large number of the occupants of our prisons are criminals by circumstance rather than by choice is an opinion likely to receive greater support in the future than it does at a time when scientific insight into the causes of human behaviour is only beginning to exercise a beneficial influence upon the conduct of human affairs.

But, allowing for this, and admitting the truth of the opinion, there remains a reliable number of convicted and unconvicted persons who, sane in mind and healthy in body, regard a life of criminal enterprise as one as worthy of consideration as any other activity in which human beings engage as a means of livelihood.

The vast majority of persons find it necessary to earn money by performing some task or other for which there is a demand, and so far as may be possible they select that task which is most agreeable or least distasteful to their personal inclinations. And they go on performing this task until they can afford to rest from their labours or until they may desire to do so.

In this respect the crook proper differs in no way from the rest of his fellows, save that in his case he performs a task for which there is no demand at all, or for which there would be no demand if his customers could envisage in advance the results of their employment of his services: the only exception being the crook who lives by supplying illicit demands.

Nobody, so far as one is aware, unless he be himself a crook at heart, desires his house to be pillaged or his wardrobe to be deprived of its contents—and only then if he be heavily insured. Thus the ‘screwsman,’ be he housebreaker or burglar, earns his living by performing a task for which there exists no popular demand whatever. And he does this because he observes that, despite this lack of demand, a living may be made by this means, Society as yet having devised no adequate means for preventing the practice of this calling, its primary expedient of hanging all burglars caught having miserably failed as a deterrent.

Similarly, Society has as yet found itself incapable of checking the activities of the other branch of crook enterprise in which the ‘confidence man’ in his many and varied forms lives and moves and has his being. And the result is that talented artists of this calibre find a livelihood at their disposal which is both profitable and agreeable to their tastes by pretending to meet the demands of those in whom they can inspire trust.

In the pursuit of their dual vocations, the ‘screws-

man' relies mainly on his physical strength, and the 'confidence man' on his glibness of tongue or charm of personality, though both alike require, if they are to succeed, a readiness of thought which will enable them to be continually in advance of the mental calculations of their opponents.

They who embark upon the careers of professional crookdom do so with a full knowledge of the interruptions to which those careers are liable, if their practitioners for any reason fall into the hands of the police. Thus it is part of the business of every sensible crook to have a working knowledge of the criminal law in so far as it affects the course of behaviour in which he specializes, as also to be fully aware of the powers of the police.

And to this knowledge may be suitably added in time an accurate understanding of the rights of a prisoner during his period of detention, as also of the best attitude of mind to adopt so as to ensure the maximum of comfort.

In his general relationship to the rest of Society, the professional crook may be adequately described as a moral nonconformist, and, as every nonconformist will agree, one can be a nonconformist and yet be perfectly sane.

He simply prefers to contract out from the admittedly orthodox point of view of the majority. And, like the members of all historic minorities, he finds a desire among his opponents to make him bow his knee to Baal, or, in more modern phraseology, to persuade him to accept the standpoint

of established public opinion as interpreted by its priests and prophets, its welfare workers and all good people who scour the whole world to find one proselyte in order to make him like unto themselves.

And if he thinks there is anything definite to be gained by pretending to surrender his soul into Society's keeping, he does so, for he most sincerely holds discretion to be the better part of valour; but if he possess the courage of his inmost convictions, he remains a crook at heart until opportunity offers a fresh demonstration of his powers.

Unlike his social benefactors, he has no desire to make all men like himself. He sees no reason whatever for trying to persuade self-satisfied persons to be other than they are. He suffers fools gladly, seeing he himself is wise, and thereby endorses the teaching of the great Apostle. He takes the world as he finds it, and, like his spiritual counterpart, the saint, he seeks for all its hidden and unsuspected treasures, and finds them. Indeed, he has much in common with the saints of history, who, faced with the same powers that be, as those with which he has had to contend, have never permitted 'imprisonments oft,' 'scourgings many' or even the death sentence to deter them from the pursuit of their vocation—a line of reasoning which we commend with all humility to those who have faith in penal methods and who talk of the necessity of stamping out crime.

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Regarding the crook proper, therefore, as a spiritual rebel possessed of a different orientation of mind to the saint, it must also be carefully borne in mind that he is an artist and a business man. He may, it is true, be a poor artist, but he is always a money-maker, at least with intent. There is no room in the real crook world for an idealist like Raffles. It is a world, the motto of which at all times is 'Art for money's sake.'

And in this world, as we have said, labour side by side 'confidence men' and 'robbers'; those, that is to say, who obtain their money by false pretences, and those who obtain it by taking it, openly or secretly, the members of each side of the profession regarding themselves in all probability as constituting the 'Senior Service' in Crookdom.

Other crooks there be who occupy midway positions between the two, and who in the carrying out of their work have need of the qualities of both kinds of artist; or in other words, the relationship between the different branches of the crook profession is as intimate as that which pertains in the medical profession. The burglars, house-breakers, and safe-blowers approximate to the specialist surgeons, while the confidence men correspond to the specialist physicians with a good bedside manner. And there are plenty of general practitioners.

But there the analogy ends—at least we hope so—for we must now say a few words upon the art of the ‘confidence man’ and the demands it makes upon its exemplifiers in that the bulk of the pages which follow are concerned with this side of the profession.

The artist who would be a confidence crook must possess an unlimited amount of self-assurance, coupled with sufficient heartlessness to enable him to have a complete contempt for all those who by their behaviour exhibit trust in him. Equipped with these essentials of success, he may then consider carefully, with regard to such other gifts with which he may be endowed, which kind of confidence trick it may be expedient for him to practise as a means of livelihood.

As in the art of the conjurer, so in that of the confidence crook there exists a traditional repertory of tricks, the correct performance of which embodies the experience and embellishments of generations of painstaking artists. It must be the ambition of the young confidence crook, therefore, to make himself at home in this traditional atmosphere of skill, and to stamp it where possible with the impress of his own individuality. Gradually he will discover what portion of the field of enterprise is best suited to the expression of such talents as he may possess.

The first step in wisdom for the artist in fraud is the clear perception of the weak points in the character of his fellow-beings. These he very soon

discovers range themselves under the general headings of pity, ambition, need, lust and unquestioning trust. Under the blinding influence of any of these mental states, an individual is rendered temporarily incapable of resisting the hypnotic influence of his wide-awake assailant. It is the business of the confidence crook to profit by this dethronement or absence of the reasoning faculties by bringing his talents to bear upon the particular form of weakness exposed to his mercy. If in so doing he feels pity himself for his prey, or still more, if he experiences physical attraction towards it, he will learn before long that persons who excite in him such emotions must be scrupulously avoided if he is to succeed in his artistic career. Like other artists, he will find it necessary to keep his professional and private lives in watertight compartments, never permitting the claims of the one to conflict with the desires of the other. Meanwhile, he will consider which of the rôles he can most adequately play, and for success in which nature has most lavishly endowed him. Is he to figure as a trader on the pity in the human heart? Is he to thrive on the greed of those whose desire it is to acquire wealth by quick and devious means? Is he to batten on the lusts of the average man and woman? Or is he to turn to his own ends the simple trust he inspires in the hearts of the unsophisticated and simple in mind? He need not necessarily restrict his genius to one of these roads of activity only; he may find himself equipped by nature to function successfully



in more than one of these avenues of approach. But by one or other of these roads he will discover himself at all times to be travelling, and each road can claim to possess many travellers, each plying his department of the trade by various means—all fully aware of the fate which lies in store for every artist in fraud who permits himself to fall into the hands of the legal representatives of the mental outlook of his prey.

In his relation to the Criminal Law, the confidence man finds himself eligible for its interference if his behaviour can be described under the headings of blackmail, forgery, false pretences, larceny by trick, embezzlement, obtaining credit by fraud, conversion, bankruptcy offences, false personation, cheating at play, and uttering counterfeit coins. In all of these illicit forms of enterprise the crook practitioner depends for his success upon winning or possessing the confidence of his intended victims. And if detected and convicted, he renders himself liable for sentences of varying lengths from penal servitude for life downwards to imprisonment for a comparatively short period of time. But the thought of the possible punishment in store, and the deprivation of the pleasures of life, have never prevented any artist whose soul is in his work from continuing to practise his profession. If there were confidence men galore in the days when it was a capital offence to perform many of their undertakings, one may be reasonably sure that our present penal methods will not in any way interfere unduly

with the handing down of these traditional means of livelihood. In envisaging his prospects of success, the crook, like the rest of humanity, takes into consideration the fact that at intervals he may be laid up in hospital, and if wise, he will be the first to perceive that such periods of recuperation, if not too prolonged, with the opportunities for meditation they offer, have their own value in the general scheme of individual endeavour.

But, once more like the rest of humanity, the confidence man and his brother the burglar, naturally desire for so long as may be, to be up and doing, and in consequence are as anxious to avoid the attentions of the police officers as are others reluctant to call in the doctor, in order to be told authoritatively what they already may personally know; namely, that they have been ailing for a considerable period, and that their complaints have a hold upon their systems.

And it may be observed at this point that not every patient who enters a consulting-room wishes to be cured of his defects, if restoration to health means the total abandonment of habits of life which have become congenial.

Moreover, the professional crook in those hours of meditation in his cell probably reflects that he is by no means the only incurable nuisance on earth, and that therefore if the time has arrived when Society wants to heal the mentally afflicted, it might be as well for it to begin at the top as to begin at the bottom. For if mankind as a whole

be in a fallen imperfect state, it is very difficult for one set of myopic beings to set about the restoration of the spiritual eyesight of others, and especially is this the case if the minority to be cured are on the whole far wider awake and much more observant than their physicians.

But it must now be our duty to endeavour to entertain the reader by setting forth in some detail a selection of the many ways in which the crooks proper set about their business.

## TRADERS ON PITY

THE spectacle of what is believed to be the genuine distress or misfortune of a fellow-being is apt to arouse in the human heart a sense of pity and a desire to render assistance in some practical way. This latter desire may be whole-hearted in its nature, or it may be merely the outcome of traditional teachings urging such assistance as a duty. Thus it comes to pass that people help distressed persons either gladly or because they feel they ought to do so.

The realization of this trait in human nature is a first step in the crook artist's psychological perception; a second step being the studied application of this knowledge to professional purposes. Pity is a gilt-edged security, upon the dividends of which it is the business of a large number of confidence crooks to live. Their duty is to call this virtue forth in a variety of ways, by simulating distress, and thereby making those who behold, or hear of it, either genuinely sorry and anxious to relieve it, or sufficiently uncomfortable to cause them to feel that it may be worth their while to pay in cash for the dispersion of such mental depression. And, in order to produce either of these happy results, all that it is necessary for the crook to do is to

inspire at least a temporary confidence in the beholder, either by telling him a moving tale, or by writing him a touching letter, or by acting in his presence some rôle calculated by experience to evoke the sympathy required in a practical and exchangeable form.

Of all rôles to be selected, that of the mendicant has ever been the most popular, for to be a beggar by profession is to be master of one's destiny, at least during those periods when one is not shut up for short periods in prison by the representatives of an unimaginative State, whose appreciation of Art has ever been notoriously negligible.

In this sphere of the profession it may be a positive advantage to have met at some time or other with an accident, maiming one for life, but greatly adding to one's powers of appeal. For this reason, begging has for long attracted to its ranks persons with only one leg, or with no legs; persons who are blind; and persons who have wounds likely to excite pity. These latter are handicapped in England by our Vagrancy Acts from deriving the full advantage that belongs to them by right in some countries in Europe; but they must not be accounted extinct. On the whole, however, the beggars of England content themselves with posing as sellers of matches, street musicians, or the musicians' confederates, who carry the cap for the benefit and convenience of passers-by. That they are beggars there can be no reasonable doubt, for no one, so far as one is aware, buys matches in the street or

contributes to street musicians because he desires matches or the sound of melody, but because he is overcome by a passing pity for a poor destitute match-seller, or a poor frozen cornet-player, or a little unemployed orchestra on the march. And the artists know this; otherwise they would not continue to ply their trade and grow old in their profession; nor would the musicians be so careful to play those melodies only which have been found by experience most to cleave the human heart in twain. It is their business to know all these tunes, for whenever the heart of a passer-by is cleft in twain, it is exceedingly probable that at least twopence will fall out of its interior.

The advantages of being a cripple may be considerable in the social world in which the mendicants mostly pass the time of day. One can take considerable liberties with one's fellow-beings, relying on the fact that they will not feel it to be quite gentlemanly to fight a man with one leg. On the other hand, one may, if necessary, astound opponents, if not literally stupefy them, by the sudden use of one's crutch as a weapon. The rest for the arm may with advantage be forced upwards under an adversary's chin, with results both surprising and satisfactory, and with the knowledge that public sympathy is always on the side of the cripples. Indeed, is there not a popular slogan: "Go it, ye cripples!"?

With practice, likewise, it is possible to run at a great pace with one leg and a crutch; indeed, the

advantages of this disability are, as we have said, very considerable.

In private life, and when off duty, one assumes a mechanical leg and the better appearance of the two-legged trouser; but when business hours begin the mechanical leg must be left at home, for its effect on the heart is practically nil, and it impedes progress.

If a woman mendicant, one may add to one's income by carrying a baby, and by pinching it when old ladies pass by; but here again the law of the land is not very sympathetic, and the practice is hardly to be recommended.

Quite otherwise the habit of carrying about a dog. Dogs make a permanent appeal from Dog Toby downwards; and if they can be persuaded to hold a pipe in their mouths while their owner plays the piano, the effect is very touching, and many are 'touched.' It is almost as moving, indeed, as the weather-beaten artist who plays a home-made violin out of tune. To play persistently out of tune is an art in itself, and, one imagines, a difficult one; but if it causes the musically-minded pedestrian to murmur, "Poor fellow, what courage!" then one has one's reward, like every other good Pharisee. Art for money's sake.

Now it stands to reason that match-sellers and street musicians may be perfectly genuine persons, and their occupation merely that which outwardly it would appear to be. The match-seller may seriously ply his trade because he feels there is a

deficiency of tobacconists, or that their closing hours are a cause of public irritation; or again, he may think that persons who do not frequent taverns may be inconvenienced when in need of a light, or that they may feel disinclined to approach a coffee-stall, far less to accost a fellow-being in days when it is so comparatively easy to be arrested by plain-clothes officers for speaking to any male person. All these considerations may make the vendor of matches set up as a *bona fide* trader.

Likewise the street musician may seriously believe that the streets of a great city might become saddened, did he not try to enliven them with his art, and that there is a popular demand for itinerant melody and a quenchless desire for the *Londonderry Air*, *Annie Laurie*, *O Solo Mio*, and the wailing melodies of *Trovatore*. The feeling that this is so, and this only, may explain the presence of these artists on our streets. And if this indeed be so, there is no false pretence in their behaviour. They only slip into the ranks of the great profession we are considering when they attain their financial ends by making their beholders and hearers believe that they are, in fact, poor destitute wretches, compelled by a cruel law to pretend to sell matches or to play upon instruments of divers kinds, as the sole alternative to the workhouse; that they are not, that is to say, like most of their passers-by, moderately successful wage-earners at a job which they have found by experience pays sufficiently well to be indefinitely continued.



In the pursuit of their art they are hampered by the knowledge that they may be at any moment, and perhaps for some time, under the cat-like observation of two plain-clothes police officers, whose object it is to ascertain with accuracy to what extent they receive money without giving any commodity in exchange, be the commodity matches or music; or, in the latter case, whether the music given be too much appreciated for the requirements of law and order, in that a crowd collects to listen and thereby 'causes an obstruction.' Against these twin dangers of giving forth no music, and providing too good a programme, the artist needs constantly to be on his guard. Hence the danger of possessing a really fine voice or possessing no voice at all. The essence of wisdom in this line consists in adherence to the maxim of the happy medium and keeping a good look-out for the police. But, even thus, the artists appear in the dock of police-courts charged with causing obstructions, a matter merely of a fine, or with begging—a more serious affair, as it may probably mean imprisonment for a month if it turns out that the artist in question has any previous convictions of similar behaviour.

Thus an old soldier of fifty-seven years of age, neither a match-seller nor a musician, being observed by police officers to speak one evening, first to a guardsman, then to a man and woman, and later to two women, saying to the latter, "Can you spare me a copper? I'm an old soldier," was arrested

and charged with begging. In his possession were discovered three £1 notes, one ten-shilling note, one half-crown and 1s. 2½d. bronze. He resolutely denied in court ever saying anything of the kind or of begging from anyone, though he did make the following interesting remark to the magistrate: "I intended going to Tunbridge Wells, but went and had a drink. I have been to Scotland Yard, and wrote a beautiful letter to Lord Byng, whom I knew as a subaltern in the Hussars. What money I have is my own; I beg of nobody."

There were, however, a sufficiency of previous convictions for begging to make one of the most lenient magistrates in London think that a fortnight's residence at Wandsworth might be appropriate, the defendant being quite obviously an old soldier in every sense of the word, and therefore a good artist.

In this department of the profession it is sound wisdom to turn to advantage all situations which may be exploited. Thus, during a time of distress in the coal-fields, a man appeared in Oxford Street bearing a placard which explained to the passers-by that he was a Manchester miner, that the pits were closed down, and that he had neither pension nor dole. He was accompanied by his wife. At the time of their arrest they had only collected one pound, but the man had credit with the police for previous experience as an artist. The court was Great Marlborough Street and the magistrate was Mr. Mead, so that it is not surprising to learn that

in this case he retired for a whole calendar month from the public gaze. His wife was bound over in £3 for three years, the condition being that she remained out of town during that period.

To the neighbouring court at Marylebone came one morning a young man, by profession a window-cleaner, whose habit it had been for some months at least, accompanied by his wife, to appear in the streets with their two children, one aged three and the other twelve. The man carried the infant child on his shoulders, while he held out some boxes of matches, the wife's business being to say "Thank you" at short intervals.

On cold nights the spectacle of this destitute family naturally excited much pity—as well it might; but, unfortunately for the parents, it excited at length the pity of authorities more interested in the welfare of the children than their forbears.

The man was sentenced to seven days' imprisonment, and the woman, either as a result of the shock of his arrest or of the thought of losing her children, at this very psychological moment gave birth to another child.

Musicians who appear before the magistrate, like pipers who played before Moses, have as a rule a better reception, for there is something peculiarly affecting in the presence of a cornet-player, a violinist, or a vocalist in the dock. A band, like a corporation, may have no soul, but a solitary musician is seldom devoid of personality, and it may be that his personality makes a greater appeal

to the magistrate than it does even to the passers-by who help by supporting its genius to contribute to its temporary arrest. Be this as it may, it has by no means infrequently been the case that a magistrate has asked the musician in custody to give him a private demonstration of his skill, and after listening, in the company of his clerk, has come to the conclusion that members of the public might perhaps have been willing to pay the artist for his music alone, and not out of response merely to his dumb demands for pity at exchange value.

And in such circumstances 'sharp violins proclaim their jealous pangs' in peace, and the artist returns to his audience, faint yet pursuing.

Such wandering careers have their own charm. The musician can be his own master, a consideration carefully to be weighed in an era when all but the fortunate and the rebellious work for fixed hours at monotonous tasks. The musician can down his cornet, enter a friendly tavern, and return at will to the streets, without any fear of reprimand or dismissal. His is a life of freedom from discipline, a state of existence favoured for long by all who find themselves able to exemplify it. He may even persuade himself that he gives his public a fair exchange for the income derived, that he does not in fact trade upon its pity. And this may be true, though, as we have already hinted, the proof of a street musician's talents lies in the evidence adduced by two police officers to a magistrate, that he caused an obstruction by his melodies in that his hearers

became rooted to the ground, and that in a manner, if for long continued, likely to cause a breach of the peace.

But, leaving the vocal streets and echoing greens, it is quite probable that we shall discover in some one or other of the fast-closed rooms of over-tenanted houses a practitioner in the subtle art of begging-letter-writing. It is the object of the artist in this branch of the profession to move the hearts of philanthropic ladies and gentlemen of all ages and, with due caution, the better regulated hearts of the clergy.

All that it is actually necessary to do, in order to attain success at this game, is to be a skilful writer and a profound observer of human nature, and to possess a convenient accommodation address where one can call at discreet intervals for the accumulating pecuniary results. By an 'accommodation address' is usually understood one of the many small shops, tobacconists or newsagents, that receive letters to be called for in return for a small fixed remuneration on the part of their recipient. Despite their obvious convenience, these little letter bureaux have their drawbacks from the artistic point of view, in that their owners are subject to the provisions of the Official Secrets Act of 1920, which places them under the obligation of keeping a careful record of all such transactions, and renders them liable at any moment to police inspection. This being so, it is naturally wiser to prevail upon a trusty friend to be one's

'accommodation address' than to tempt providence by employing the services of a public bureau. Trusty friends, however, in the crook world are even harder to find than in other realms of human experience; so that the artist, as often as not, hopes for the best whilst having recourse to ordinary methods.

Now no one knows better than does the confidence crook the value of expressing verbal sympathy with the lot of the unfortunate. Being possessed of a vivid imagination, he pictures both to himself and to his hearers—to the latter in particular—the acts of unselfish kindness he would like to perform if he could. Thus it came into the mind of an elderly man of seventy to write a letter to several persons, and amongst them an old lady of eighty-four years of age, telling them that he was a married man with a large family, and how that there dwelt in the same house as himself a poor old man, utterly destitute, and about to be sent to a sanatorium. He went on to say that were it not for the fact of his own domestic calls, he would be the first to give this poor old fellow the help he required, and that since this was clearly impossible, he did the only other thing he could, namely, to bring his sad plight to the notice of the recipient of this letter, whose reputation for philanthropy was perhaps wider known and better appreciated than he (or she) suspected. In this way he dared to hope the poor old lodger's sorrows might yet be eased a little by the unexpected kindness he was destined to receive as a result of this letter.

The writer of this touching appeal directed any answer that might be forthcoming to be addressed to him at an 'accommodation address.' At this address he called at intervals, and in the space of six weeks his literary efforts were rewarded by the reception of twenty-three replies. He was, however, most unfortunately arrested one day, on leaving this address, and still more unfortunately he had in his pocket the aforementioned letter from the octogenarian lady, which contained notes to the value of £2 10s.

This, and two other pieces of documentary evidence, coupled with the fact that he was himself the old gentleman, and neither married nor in ill health, but living at Rowton House, proved his temporary undoing. He retired at the suggestion of the magistrate for four months, without hard labour, which may possibly have meant that he darned socks in the part-worn stores in one of H.M. Prisons, until it was time once again to resume his activities as a scribe.

Another man, much younger in years but maturer in wisdom, who hailed from Madras but lived by preference in Strutton Ground, contrived to keep the ball rolling for two years by obtaining charitable contributions from well-to-do people. He also came temporarily to grief by writing to a clergyman in St. John's Wood, to whom he represented himself as being penniless and stranded in London and desperately in need of his fare to Liverpool. He said he had been in Newcastle Infirmary for

several months with double pneumonia, and that he had been ordered to return to his home in Allahabad. He concluded his letter by saying: 'Hoping that you will in your great mercy and pity help me. God above knows what your help means to me.'

In response to this moving letter the clergyman sent him twenty-six shillings, just sufficient to ensure his reaching Liverpool in comfort; but his objective, alas, was not to be the docks of that busy port, but merely that at Marylebone, from where he set sail on a three months' cruise either to Wormwood Scrubs or Wandsworth.

To the same court, and quite recently, came another young man, a shoemaker by profession, whose practice it had become to write letters to actors and actresses, in which he reminded them that he had formerly been a stage hand at a theatre at which they had acted.<sup>1</sup>

One such letter he addressed to a Miss L., and it ran thus:

'Dear Miss L., I am terribly sorry for this, but you were so charming when I was a stage hand at the Savoy Theatre this year, that I come to you in my despair. After a serious illness, I have just got a good job, but I am desperate for 4s. 9d. to get the dress clothes from pawn. It is so hard, because I cannot get any more help from the charities, and I am the sole support of

<sup>1</sup> *News of the World*, December 1930.



my invalid mother. God bless you if you will help me now, and trust me to repay you within a week. Yours truly, A. S.'

In order the better to lend colour to his request, another letter might be enclosed purporting to come from the head-waiter of an hotel, offering the job mentioned in the former.

Unfortunately, the writer had had a previous shot at Miss L. several months before under a different name, and by one of those tricks of fate she had kept the letter, and had compared the handwritings. The result was the capture of the young artist in her drawing-room, and the discovery on his person of four other letters and the addresses of nineteen prospective actors and actresses.

His defence consisted of the brief remark, "I have got to live somehow," an observation, as it seems to us, eminently sensible. By way of practical response, the magistrate indicated to him a method by which he could live for at any rate the ensuing three months, he being already credited by the police with a 'bind over' for house-breaking, evidently a side-line.

From the foregoing examples it may seem to some readers that the art of begging-letter-writing is unduly liable to interruption at the hands of the common enemy; but it must be borne in mind that the greatest artists are they who are not caught, or who, if caught, are at once acquitted. But before

one describes any of the three examples quoted as a failure, one must remember that a sentence of three or four months in a modern English prison may seem to some a very small tax upon their time compared with the much longer periods, not merely of freedom, but freedom from the Law. Every crook realizes that even a life of criminal labour may be punctuated by holidays, and he is the first to agree that the length of those holidays should be fixed by Law. He has no belief in the new-fangled notion of an indeterminate holiday.

But, as we have said, the greater the crook, the less the amount of leisure for listening to concerts at Wandsworth and elsewhere. Short sentences, however, as meted out by magistrates, can be borne by the diligent crook with equanimity, it being no social disgrace in his case to be sent to prison, though it may be a reflection on his methods of skilful operation.

But by far the most important traders on human pity are they who rely for their results merely upon their personality and their powers to 'tell the tale.' And in these pages we shall have again and again to return to these artists under different headings of appeal.

Restricting ourselves at the moment to those whose appeal is to the pity of their hearers, we must once more remind the reader that persons often respond to such appeals, not because they actually worry much over any spectacle of distress, but because they have been reared in the belief that

they ought to be visibly moved, and act with appropriate readiness.

The crook artist, of course, completely realises this. He understands the psychology of human nature, and he knows that when mental conflicts arise in the mind, the line most calculated to produce peace of soul will be pursued by the majority. He knows that favourable answers to begging-letters are written most frequently by those who are vexed rather than concerned, yet anxious to have peace within. For this reason the teller of tales will often approach the clergy, because he argues that most of these are tormented with the thought that they are so seldom able to practise what they preach. Hence the desire to afford them an opportunity to do so, at least in private.

Thus a young man in the early twenties, tall, well-spoken, neatly attired, and possessed of pleasant features, may make it his hobby to pass himself off as a theological student of some provincial college, who, coming to London for the week-end, has experienced the great misfortune of being robbed of his wallet while watching the changing of the Guard outside Buckingham Palace. He thus finds himself stranded without the means either to pay his hotel bill or return to his college, where he is due the following day; a simple tale which he tells to those London curates whom he has decided to call upon in his quandary, in the hope that they may feel moved to advance him a loan, to be repaid immediately on his return to his

theological headquarters. He tells his tale exceedingly well, and he selects for his benefactors curates who live alone, either in rooms or in a flat. He recognises that some of these will place little credence in his story, but he relies upon the belief that the majority, thinking that it is better to be deceived by a rogue than dismiss a genuine case, will give him something, even if it be but a shilling, with which to telegraph his distress to the Principal of his college. Others, again, he reflects, will be haunted by the thought that the stranger on their threshold may be that ubiquitous angel whom one entertains unawares.

Conflicting emotions may underlie their response, but a response of some kind is more likely to be expected than an actual rebuff. He takes care to avoid redundant calls in the same locality, and he gives all vicars a wide berth. Vicars, he reasons, have been curates once; hence their memories may be contaminated at the source. Of all persons, moreover, they are the most likely to practise the objectionable habit of telephoning the police. Even when suitable subjects, they will probably have wives, who, aided and abetted by their maid-servants, will seek to save the vicar from himself by intercepting any stranger on the doorstep. Hence they had better be left severely alone.

Another method by which curates may be sometimes approached successfully by the wandering artist, is by accosting them as they are leaving the church after a service, and representing himself to be the nephew of the caretaker of the Church

House of the parish in which the selected curate formerly worked; and on the strength of the local knowledge of that parish he may be able to produce, to prevail upon the clergyman to advance him a little money. Needless to say, the successful performance of this trick needs a little preparation in the form of previous inquiries into the curate's career, and a visit, where necessary, to the parish in question. But for this purpose a careful study of *Crockford's Clerical Directory* may be recommended, as this is replete with useful and accurate information upon the careers of all clergymen of the Church of England.

N.B.—It is better to catch a clergyman just after he has left the church than to attempt to waylay him inside. Vergers are on the whole 'wise' to the methods of the profession, and it is to their interest to side against the crook. This must not, however, be taken to mean that they lack sympathy or understanding.

It may be well worth while at times to call upon the chaplains of Continental health resorts, and to represent oneself as one who, after paying his hotel bill, suddenly discovers he has not the money for his journey home. It is just conceivable that the clergyman in such a case may think that if he has to provide any assistance at all, it will be cheaper to get rid of the applicant altogether than to risk any further calls from a derelict pleasure-seeker.

As often as not the chaplain will be staying at one of the best hotels, and one may safely count

on reaching the lounge without the necessity of disclosing one's business. Once there, one may derive confidence from the thought that the chaplain will find it very difficult to dismiss an impoverished suppliant from surroundings so indicative of luxury and superfluous wealth.

It is, however, unwise for any artist to attempt under these conditions the trick of the lost wallet and the return ticket, for it may involve the giving of the name of the hotel in the place from which one is supposed to have come on a day's excursion, and chaplains have been known, whilst affecting to go to their rooms for money, to get the hotel porter to telephone the hotel mentioned, for corroboration of the story. If this occurs, one may suggest that there may be two hotels in the place with the same name, or simulate complete stupefaction. But one is on perilous ground. The police may have already been informed. Hence the wisdom of telling a story which cannot be verified rapidly.

The following account, supplied in substance by a former chaplain at Ostend, will illustrate the perfect method of approach as carried out by an artist of mature ability, though the conclusion of the narrative is a trifle melancholy for the youthful reader of promise.<sup>1</sup>

'There arrived one spring day at Ostend an elderly itinerant clergyman, accompanied by a

<sup>1</sup> This narrative appeared as part of an article contributed by the author to *The Green Quarterly*. Summer, 1930.

young lady, whom he described as his niece and who was thought by some to have been born in Joppa. At this period of my career I happened to be British Chaplain at this exotic seaport. For some days before he called upon me at my hotel, I had observed upon the still almost deserted sea-front the figure of a man in faultless clerical attire, who recalled to my mind the appearance of the late Mr. H. B. Irving in *The Silver King*. Tall, handsome, and silver-haired, he would have done credit to any melodramatic stage in existence, or to any catalogue issued by those select sartorial artists who help to preserve the dignity of the episcopate in these latter days of loose attire.

‘Sometimes he weathered the Digue alone, but more often he was to be seen in company with the romantic young lady whom he asked the residents of well-seasoned, if not mellowed, Ostend to regard as his niece.

‘They put up at a small hotel, where they occupied communicating rooms, owing to the uncle being liable to heart attacks in the watches of the night. The length of their visit was indefinite, but so far as the young lady was concerned, it was abruptly terminated by a demand from her relatives to the Vice-Consul for her instant deportation to Dover, accompanied by the price of a ticket to London.

‘This left her mentor stranded all by himself at Ostend, a fact which may have hastened his

very natural desire to call upon his resident brother.

‘Not altogether unprepared for his visit, owing to a habit my friend the Vice-Consul and I had practised of keeping ourselves mutually cognizant of the arrival and movements of interesting fellow-countrymen, I received him in the spacious Winter Garden of the Hôtel Royal du Phare, an apartment approached by a long corridor from the entrance-hall, so that he had every opportunity a distinguished actor could desire to make an impressive entrance.

‘He made no allusion whatever to his niece. So far as I was to judge by his conversation, he was an ecclesiastical bachelor, visiting Ostend in solitude. We exchanged the usual observations on the towns of Belgium, and on my mentioning Brussels, a look of reminiscent pathos shone out of his eyes.

“‘It was there,” he said slowly, “that I learnt to play the violin.” He paused a moment, and then added, in a voice of deep emotion, “In my youth.”

‘I was naturally much overcome by the touching memory I had evoked by the mention of Brussels. Hitherto the name of that city had been associated in my mind with a product much lower in the scale of nature than the violin.

‘By an easy transition we passed rapidly from violins to organs. Could he be of any help at the English Church next Sunday in the capacity



of a humble organist? I told him that we were fortunate in possessing the regular services of a lady organist, but that, as it happened, she was desirous if possible to be absent from Ostend the coming week-end, so that I might be only too glad to avail myself of his kind offer.

“Let me see,” he replied, “this is Wednesday. Perhaps on Saturday afternoon you would permit me to practise a little on the organ those chants and hymns which would be required.”

‘Telling him that he should have every facility he needed, we talked for a short while on other subjects of interest, after which he rose to take his leave. My feelings on his departure were divided. I had not anticipated that his request would be merely that he might play the organ. Such requests from strangers were, in my experience, extraordinarily rare. Almost without exception, people who called to see me in this fashion, it turned out, confused me in their minds with the Relieving Officer. Often it took me quite a long time to make them see their mistake, and when they did, and went empty away, they always left me feeling much more uncomfortable, in all probability, than they ever intended to be themselves.

‘But the departure of my silver-haired brother left me even more uneasy than would have been the case had I endured the agony of watching him accomplish his exit down that interminable corridor in the capacity of an unsuccessful suitor.

‘Something told me that this visit had not been so guileless as it appeared to be. At any rate, I made haste to implore my lady organist to choose any other week-end in the whole year than the approaching one for her exeat.

‘Saturday morning arrived and passed by uneventfully. At about 1.0 p.m. I descended to lunch, wondering whether my friend would or would not call during the afternoon. The mail-boat left for Dover each day at 2.15 p.m., and since it was the habit of most visitors to watch its departure, it seemed to me unlikely that I should be disturbed before that hour. Thus I was disagreeably surprised when, at about 1.30 p.m., a page-boy approached my table to inform me that a reverend gentleman was asking for me in the writing-room. Leaving the dining-room, I hastened in. He rose to shake hands, but sank rapidly back in his chair, saying (I am bound to observe a little melodramatically) “Ah, these palpitations!”

“My dear sir,” he continued, “a—er—most distressing thing has occurred. I have received a telegram necessitating my immediate return to London. The boat, as you doubtless are aware, leaves in little over half an hour. And I find that, after paying my hotel bill, and giving the waiters their tips—which latter one must do, sir, otherwise they are so very inattentive to one’s needs—that, in point of fact, I have not got sufficient money to get to London.”

'I replied that, it being Saturday, and the banks closed, I was exceedingly doubtful whether I had available funds either. He then asked me whether I had enough to get him to Dover, as perhaps, once safely landed, he might approach some of the clergy there.

'Perhaps it was the vision of these clergy, perhaps it was the baleful recollection that he learnt the violin in Brussels, perhaps it was a sudden realization of the grandeur of this silver-haired, post-perfect priest; perhaps it was the thought that it might be worth the fare to London to add him to the number of passengers on that afternoon's boat: I cannot say. But the temptation was irresistible. I handed him his freedom.

'With great dignity, and apparently without any strain to his heart, he walked with me down the corridor to the door of the hotel.

' "I am going to help a colleague in Woburn Gardens," he said. "Directly I arrive, I will write and repay your kind assistance. I hope I may hear from you again."

' "I hope I may hear from you also," I replied.

'We parted. Twenty minutes later I watched the mail-boat sail out of the harbour.

'Two months later I noticed in an English paper that an elderly clergyman of a familiar name had been arrested on landing from Dieppe, that he was wanted by fellow-clergymen all over

the country, and that he had received one month in the second division.'

*Sic transit gloria mundi.*

Methods vary though objects be the same. There called, one Sunday<sup>a</sup> afternoon some years ago, upon a doctor and his family a charming young lady, who, on stating that she was the niece of the Rector of the parish, an Archdeacon, was at once admitted into the drawing-room. Arrived here, she explained to the doctor and those assembled that she had been sent by her aunt, the Archdeacon's wife (who, incidentally, was a titled lady) to request the doctor as a special favour to call at the Rectory that afternoon. She added that her aunt was secretly anxious about the Rector's health, and thought that if she could manage to leave him alone in the room with the doctor during the latter's call, he might discuss his ailments and pave the way thereby for further professional visits, whereas nothing would induce him, as it was, to send for the doctor in the ordinary way. Her aunt was quite sure, the young lady hastened to add, that as a parishioner of the Archdeacon the doctor would not mind dropping in for a cup of tea in this friendly manner.

A little puzzled by this request, in view of the fact that he was not the Archdeacon's favoured physician in the neighbourhood, he nevertheless at once set forth to the Rectory, thinking possibly that this might be a preparatory move on the part

of the Archdeacon's wife to bring about a change of doctors. At any rate, he knew both the Rector and his wife quite well, so that to call upon them would be in any case a pleasant duty.

His informant, the young and charming lady, had meanwhile accepted the invitation of his mother to remain to tea. So that he arrived at the Rectory alone. The Archdeacon appeared agreeably surprised to see him, and his wife even more so; indeed, she seemed to the doctor to be one of the best actresses, under the circumstances, that he had ever encountered. Tea was brought in, and they sat and chatted on an immense variety of topics. Time passed, but the Archdeacon's wife made no move whatever to leave them together. On the contrary, the doctor was painfully aware that she was wondering at the unconscionable length of his visit. At last, unable to stand the strain any longer, or to bridge any more pauses in a languishing conversation, he expressed the hope that the Archdeacon was enjoying good health. To his surprise he received an immediate reply in the affirmative, not from the Archdeacon himself, but from his wife.

"He has never been better," she answered, and she said it abruptly.

The doctor expressed his natural pleasure at the receipt of such good news, and then added, "I was so pleased to make the acquaintance of your niece this afternoon."

"What niece?" queried the Archdeacon and his wife simultaneously.

"The young lady who called and asked me to visit you," replied the doctor.

The result of this last remark was completely to rekindle the dying embers of a burnt-out conversation. Suddenly there was much to discuss.

In the meantime, the charming young lady had been very busy telling the doctor's family, and some friends who were present, a most pathetic story of a poor person in the parish whom, she said, she was on her way to visit and on whose behalf she was endeavouring to raise a small fund. "Every sixpence is of help," she said.

A wave of discomfort penetrated the little company assembled, but it was instantly dispelled by that sense of duty to which all persons of good breeding are obedient in the hour of their extremity. One by one they produced their contributions, bearing in mind that sixpence had been named as the minimum sentence by the merciless young lady. Most unhappy of all present was an unfortunate elderly lady who was a caller, and who lived at some considerable distance away. She recollected with a spasm that she had nothing on her but a single half-crown. Could she venture to ask for change? Almost reduced to tears, she realized she could not. She handed it to the young lady, no longer charming in her eyes, who received it with becoming thanks. In consequence, the wretched woman had to walk the whole way home, penniless, busless.

Finally the young lady departed. It had been

quite a profitable day's work. It has never actually been placed on record what the doctor said on his return from the Rectory in the shades of the falling evening; but it was reported that the Archdeacon, who possessed that nice sense of humour with which the Church has always been rightly credited, was immensely tickled at the episode, and that the whole parish was gradually admitted into the joke. And with that strange perversity of wit in human nature, everyone thought the greatest jest of all was the unfortunate woman who walked the whole way home. For her there was no shred of pity.

Changing fashions in the sphere of female adornment are not devoid of effect in the world in which the crook proper labours. The picking of pockets yields its pre-eminence to the snatching of handbags; but the object is ever the same, no matter what the means whereby the eternal woman seeks to convey in public her everlasting purse. In a later portion of this book we shall consider the art of the pickpocket and bag-snatcher, but for the moment we need concern ourselves only with the female artist who says she has lost her purse, or has been robbed of the handbag which contained it, in order to provide herself with a moving pretext for requesting the loan of a railway fare from those deemed by her likely to be stirred to pity at the spectacle of her sorrows.

Along this beaten track of crooked human experience moved a woman who first persuaded

herself, and subsequently four other persons, that she had lost her purse containing £17 in Westminster Cathedral, and this just at the very moment that it was imperative for her to visit her brother, who was seriously ill at Birmingham. Her immediate object was to obtain the fare to that illustrious city, and she achieved her purpose very sensibly by telling the tale of her distress not to one, but to at least four persons. All four were overwhelmed by her sorrow. All four converted their pity into negotiable form. The woman's sorrow was turned to joy, for she acquired in the end more, indeed, than she had persuaded herself that she had lost. But her joy, alas, was speedily eclipsed; for somehow or other the news of her accomplishment reached the ears of Scotland Yard, with the pitiful result that a warrant was issued for her arrest—and she was arrested.

Directly she heard that a warrant was out she returned some of the contributions received, and on her appearance in court she insisted that she *had* lost her purse in the Cathedral, and that her brother had been seriously ill. This did not, however, prevent the magistrate describing her as a 'plausible impostor.' He, at any rate, recognized the artist in her works. As for the police, they had encountered her before as a bogus titled lady who collected for Catholic charities but forgot to pay the money in, until—as in this case, she heard of a warrant issued for her arrest. On that occasion she had been sent to prison for six months, but this



time she retired only for four. On the whole she figures, therefore, rather as the illustration of a process than as an example of its successful application.

As to her insistence that she *had* lost her purse in Westminster Cathedral, it was realized, of course, that it was no reflection on the Cathedral authorities that it had never been found. It may, indeed, have been found by a Protestant visitor, though there is, one believes, no ex-Cathedra pronouncement concerning findings being keepings. Thus it may have been picked up by a legitimate worshipper, but in the opinion of the court it had never in fact been lost, and therefore could not have been 'received' in the narrower sense.

That her brother may have been seriously ill no one questioned; that she may have had cause to go to Birmingham was quite a probable idea; but that it was necessary to tell the same story to four separate persons seemed to be a work of supererogation, which, had she been a Protestant, could not have been too severely condemned. She remained, however, a Catholic woman with a grievance; she was hurt because her word was doubted. But like every other 'confidence worker' she had to learn that it is difficult to convince anyone before whom one has been shown to be a liar, that one's word has any further value. She had indeed to cull the wisdom of Othello, and be able to perceive and say:

'When I have plucked the rose  
I cannot give it vital growth again.'

Thus it is important that the youthful artist in fraud should clearly understand from the very start that his word has only such value as his actions may bestow upon it; and that if these in several instances show that word to be a worthless bond, he must not grumble nor consider himself offended if his customers, when once they have satisfied themselves of his powers, decline any longer to place reliance on his statements, be they true or false.

That the true artist in crime is discouraged by the penalties imposed by the State as a recognition of his work, is unthinkable. In this respect, the outlook of saint and criminal is identical. Both live and—if necessary—die for the faith that is in them. Surrender to the State in either case is the collapse of their faith. And as the great Apostle so aptly remarked, works without faith are dead. And as all history testifies, imprisonments oft are a concomitant of faith in *contra mundum* ideals of behaviour. Hence there is the Church's Calendar, and likewise the Newgate Calendar. It is quite logical.

Thus one welcomes such an example of criminal faith as the following, leading as it does to a further illustration of the methods of the trader on pity.

A young maiden at the picturesque age of fifteen was placed on probation by a bench of magistrates, on the discovery that she had stolen some money, a course of procedure on its part worthy of the highest praise, for no one ought to be sent to prison

until he has been given a reasonable chance to show himself fit for this distinction. An appearance in the dock of a police court for the first time on any serious charge is as good a test as can be imagined for anyone who has commenced to practise as a criminal. If when so faced with the magistrates his courage forsakes him, and he wishes with all his heart and soul that he had not broken the law, then it is the plain duty of the court to instruct its probation officer to break the news to the poor wretch that he is utterly unsuited to be otherwise than a law-abiding conventional man of the world; and still more so, should this be the case, if the convicted person be ashamed of what he has done. Prison is no place for those who are ashamed of their art. It is a school of art for those anxious to improve upon their methods, a school to which they are rightly sent back each time they get caught, their capture (if it be not betrayal) being the first indication that they have not yet become masters of their art. The greatest criminals are always those who have never been caught, and are therefore never heard of by the general public.

And since one can never be sure when a person first appears in court to answer to a serious charge, whether he is or is not a *bona fide* artist, it is clear he should be placed on probation, so that he may have an opportunity to show whether he does or does not regard crime as a seriously-minded student should regard it.

Thus the magistrate who placed the young maiden of fifteen, in whose career we are momentarily interested, upon probation, was acting rightly and in a way generally to be commended throughout the length and breadth of the land.

Faced with these conditions of probation, she at once pulled herself together, with the result that before a great while she was again charged with stealing more money and sent to school for six months.

On her release, and thinking very likely that pastures new are often advisable in the pursuit of the art, she went, or got herself sent (the terms being often synonymous) to Canada, where she had scarcely had time to look round before she received another three months. She then very sensibly returned to the Mother Country. Here she began quite seriously to practise as a confidence artist, receiving a London award of three months in the year 1923, and one of six months in the year 1924. A little later she was honoured by the City of Liverpool with two months, which looks as if she had intended to have another shot at Canada. After this she returned to London, like all good artists, and went to school there for another nine months.

Fortified by all these courses of instruction, she now made a second transit to Canada, where almost immediately the City of Toronto fined her £20. Very naturally she returned at once to England, imprisonment at the cost of the State being one thing, and a fine at the cost of the artist quite

another. Soon after her arrival in the United Kingdom she washed out this insult on the escutcheon of her glory by receiving three years' penal servitude at Cambridge—in her case the equivalent of an honorary degree.

By this time, like many great artists, she must have felt that she was spending too much of her time in studying the theory of her art. This did not, however, diminish her ardour. On her next appearance in public she approached two gentlemen, quite successfully, and to each of them she told the same moving story. She said she had been married a few weeks previously in Montreal, where her father was the manager of a big motor firm. She had returned to England with her husband, and they had put up at the Waldorf Hotel, where, terrible to relate, he had deserted her. Her only relative in England was an aunt who lived at Newcastle; thus the problem which confronted her was how to get to Newcastle. She told this story so charmingly to each of the two gentlemen that she succeeded in making them both anxious to solve the problem in the same way.

She next approached a London Vicar, and at first she appeared to have succeeded with him also. He gave her the fare to Newcastle, a fare which, since she now had it in triplicate, enabled her to go to the Tyneside in comfort, where her aunt awaited her; only in this case, as in that of another immortal aunt, the lady turned out to be a young man in disguise.

The Vicar, however, made inquiries, as vicars always do. And the result of the inquiries was another nine months' study.

"You are such an old hand at the game," said the magistrate, a perfect gentleman, "that it is virtually useless to offer you advice."

Whereupon the admirable young man aforementioned stood up in court and then and there offered her marriage on her release. And one may be perfectly sure they lived happily ever afterwards.

One of the distinct charms of this young lady consists in the fact that the newspapers have given us practically nothing save the catalogue of her medals. We do not know in detail, save in the last instance, how she won them. Like a much decorated scion of the British Empire, she crosses the stage in full-dress uniform, and her spectators are left to imagine the military manoeuvre lurking modestly behind each one of her decorations. She remains as a living tribute to the virtue of pertinacity, a kind of scholastic blue-stocking in the university of crime, a woman possessed of many degrees, a young lady from Toronto, a student in the neglected science of *practical* criminology.

The trader in pity is sometimes to be picked up in the West End by anyone who delights in the pursuit of casual conversation with total strangers. London, like all great cities, may be a lonely place, and there are always wanderers ready to respond to the magic of a friendly glance. It is the business

of the crook to bestow such glances on likely customers. It is a sound policy. A friend of the author once obtained his start in life simply by glancing at a lonely middle-aged pedestrian and saying, "Cheer up, old chap."

Thus one day in the West End a man of thirty-six years of age got into conversation with a younger man, who told him amongst other things that he had obtained employment as a motor driver, but had no licence; after which hint the man of thirty-six naturally made him a present of five shillings. It may not have occurred to him at the time how odd it is in life that so many persons could obtain jobs if only they possessed five shillings at the critical moment. They possess it at other moments, but never at *the* moment.

Without doubt the five foolish virgins in the gospel story were traders on pity and, one fears, not very successful practitioners of their art when confronted with Christian Wisdom. Fortunately, however, in a religiously-minded country like Great Britain, the trader can reasonably count on the presence of Christian Folly, for nothing is considered more beautiful than the surrender of the pseudo-wise to the pseudo-foolish. Faith and hope are rightly subordinated to charity. And usually charity means permitting others to live upon oneself. Thus the Christian Englishman of thirty-six gave the younger and perhaps better educated man five shillings with which to get himself a licence to drive. He did even more, he gave

him his address in the suburbs, for all the world as though he wished to intimate he would like to see him again. And the charm of the story lies in the fact that he did see him again. He called upon him, and when he left, lo and behold he was exactly six shillings better off than when he arrived upon the doorstep. By way of gratitude he called yet again. He wished his benefactor to know that he had now obtained a job in the Thames Valley, and the only fly in the ointment of his joy was the fact, the devastating fact, that his wife, the co-partner of his existence and, one hopes, his better half, was in the workhouse. It might be that her correct address was the Institution, or Pomona Lodge, or Springfield House; but everyone knew it was the workhouse, just as babies born in Parkhurst Road become mentally associated with Holloway Prison and Parkhurst Convict Prison. It is dismal but true.

The story of his wife in the workhouse was accepted by the editor of his fortunes, who paid him £2 in cash for it. It may have been the rate of pay, we cannot positively determine, but it prompted him to return with a sequel to the story. The wife had been delivered from the workhouse, but apparently was in danger in a country that has a secret distrust of the nude in art. She had no clothes worth mentioning, which meant that the clothes she did possess could not be worn in public. Indoors she might be 'mystic wonderful,' but out of doors she might be described by police officers



as 'obscene'—they alone possessing the awful knowledge of the legal meaning of this much-loved word. Just as before his whole career depended on possessing five shillings for a licence, so now did the career of his wife depend on precisely eight times that amount.

But this charming young pasha of many tales, like other artists greater than himself, had overlooked the fact that the essence of crooked wisdom consists in knowing when to stop. The editor rejected this second manuscript and had inquiries made into its author's credentials.

As a matter of fact, his credentials were exceedingly good. He had many previous convictions, and now returned to that convalescent home of crookdom, Wandsworth Prison, for twelve months. Actually he had deserted his wife, and his children were chargeable to the parish. On this slender basis of truth he had woven much romance of a kind beloved by an emotional general public.

To the reader who is by nature and opportunity a law-abiding citizen, it must be a cause of satisfaction to note with what apparent frequency the crooked artist falls into the clutches of the police. That this is so is due rather to the carelessness of many artists than to the omniscience of the Force. To one like the author, who naturally has the careers of all crooks at heart, it is lamentable to observe the carelessness with which so many go about their work.

That the last-mentioned artist, after obtaining

£2 for the release of a wife from the workhouse who had never been there, should proceed to clothe the wretched figment of his creative imagination is praiseworthy, like all that is progressive; but that he should ask the same member of the British Public to clothe her as had released her shows a deplorable lack of acumen.

It recalls to my mind an occasion when, as an undergraduate many years ago, I was seated at dinner one hot summer evening before the open window of a ground-floor room that abutted on the street. It was a gloomy street, populated almost entirely by landladies, their husbands, and their tenants, and it was patronized at all hours by wandering artists of various departments of the profession.

On this particular evening there came to the window an itinerant vendor of strawberries who, grounding his wares on the sill, and finding no market within, proceeded to ask me, on the strength of this introduction, whether I had by any chance a superfluous pair of walking shoes, as his own were beyond repair. Being still young and still anxious to believe that human beings were incapable of telling lies for professional reasons, I most naturally realized that I had a superfluous pair of shoes, that I ought not to indulge in such redundancies, and that it was my plain duty, not having bought any strawberries, to hand them over to a disappointed and disillusioned man. I did so. They were received with becoming thanks. And there

I imagined the matter had ended. Not at all. At precisely the same hour the following evening, when, so far as I can recollect, I was eating precisely the same dinner, the landlady being a woman of no imagination, there appeared at the window, still open, the same importunate tradesman with apparently the same strawberries. That he should ask me yet once more to buy a basket struck me as being merely businesslike and friendly, but when on my declining he proceeded to inquire whether by any chance I had a superfluous pair of walking shoes, I regarded him as an impudent fellow.

"Are you, or are you not aware," I remarked coldly, "that at this very hour last evening you made a similar request and that the request was granted?"

His face lit up with a smile, and he replied, "One does make these mistakes sometimes. Sorry, guvnor; no offence meant. 'Ave a strawberry."

It suddenly dawned upon my mind what a charming fellow he was. After all—why not? But I told him to be more careful.

On yet another occasion the carelessness of the artist was brought home to me; indeed, he brought it home in person.

A young ex-prisoner, whose charms and distinctions I have already delineated elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> and who had been staying with me, had told me one Saturday that he had to go, for pressing reasons,

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Prisoner at the Bar* (Philip Allan).

to Leicester. Thus I was pleasantly surprised to receive a letter from him the following Monday morning from an hotel at Brighton. He explained his natural preference for this salubrious watering-place by stating that he had been trailed by two C.I.D. officers, and had only escaped them by this means, and that he would return if I would kindly send him a little money. Not being anxious at the moment to lose sight of him, I sent him the money, and was rewarded by his speedy return. About a fortnight later he set forth to Newcastle, and had it not been for a roundabout rumour that reached me to the effect that he was staying with a lady at Brighton, it might not have occurred to me to ring up the hotel there from which he had previously written to me. I did so, on the morning that he was due to return from Newcastle, only to discover, as I had suspected, that he and his 'wife' had just left for London, and that this had been their second visit.

On my confronting him on his return with these facts, his only reply was, "How very stupid of me to stay twice at the same hotel." I cordially agreed, and told him never to do so again. But the crook proper is a creature of habits like the rest of mankind, and, as someone said most wisely, "All habits are bad habits."

One includes both these instances of artistic carelessness in this division of our subject, because in both cases the crook gained his ends primarily by an appeal to one's pity.

Undoubtedly the better acquainted with crookdom one becomes, the less grows the temptation to act emotionally when dealing with human behaviour. One tends, indeed, in time to turn into a maxim the three Latin verbs which one learnt in one's youth as governing the genitive case, and to echo the old tag, 'Pity, remember, forget,' for he who remembers to forget to pity is spared much self-recrimination in the long run.

But it is the business of the crook to base his hopes of success on the short run. He lives in the present, and derives his income from its passing emotions. And he is, in his way, wise, for a future bounded by the possibilities of Dartmoor, Parkhurst, Chelmsford, Aylesbury, and the practical certainties of Wandsworth and all its satellites, is a depressing vision on which to meditate, unless one be sufficiently great an artist to feel that one will never make mistakes. Great artists are, however, few and prisoners are many.

Thus the majority of crooks live for the present and, once more like the saints, are wont to subscribe to the twin dicta that 'sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' and therefore why 'take thought for the morrow'?

Before bidding farewell in these pages to the traders on pity, it may be fitting to consider how from the standpoint of their opponent, the State, these activities can best be curtailed, for at present it must be obvious to every reader that the trade pays quite sufficiently well to encourage those who

practise it to put up with those occasional slings and arrows of outrageous fortune which beset the paths of the most painstaking artists.

In the opinion of the author, and speaking, that is to say, from much humiliating experience of the artists in question, it does not seem probable that the State will achieve any markedly practical results so long as human nature remains so prone to pity, and, it would seem, so incurably romantic. No serious artist is deterred by our penal methods from practising his trade, nor would he be were our prisons immeasurably more unpleasant than they are. There are crooks of all kinds in France, while no one can say that the prisons of France err on the side of comfort. A prisoner who, extradited from Nice, had stayed at several of the prisons en route to London, told the author that on arrival at Wormwood Scrubs it was as though one had at length reached Buckingham Palace, a pretty compliment to that great prison for first offenders only, though possibly an underestimation of Buckingham Palace.

But to return to our argument: it is doubtful whether our penal methods can honestly be said to have any serious effect on the pursuit of professional crooked enterprise, save that they exercise a beneficial influence on the crook's health and longevity. As it is, the encouragement of the general public outweighs the deterrence of its penal methods. It pays to be a crook so long as one is young, and so long as life on earth is agreeable. It ceases to pay

when one is middle-aged, disillusioned, and unable to stop. To be compelled to be a crook in the evening of life is a tragedy, for one has not the consolation of the saint, and even saints get worn out and surrender. But when the fires of spring are still burning fiercely, nothing will deter a young and hopeful crook from trying his hand at the game, so long as he finds by experience that human nature is perfectly willing to be gulled and pillaged, in order that it may indulge its emotions *ad lib.*

Thus it is foolish for judges to talk about stamping out crime, unless such rhetorical remarks are pleasurable when made in public; it is as foolish as it would be to speak of stamping out pity, abolishing greed and lust, and placing a premium on the bestowal of trust. Human nature remains 'human all too human,' and crooks flourish. So long as the world remains young—and it is only too apparent that the acquired wisdom of the aged is not inherited by a rising generation—there would seem to be no ground for imagining that the appeal to the emotions will languish. Everyone has to learn by experience the same lesson, that there exists on earth the crook proper, a genial or at times a macabre soul whose delight it is to teach wisdom to each rising generation and pocket the fees. The utmost our penal methods can do is to regulate crime. And the utmost our C.I.D. can achieve is to oblige the criminal proper to be an inventor as well as a practitioner. by making

the older methods of crime more and more difficult to achieve with success, whilst continually encouraging the crook to maintain a high standard of proficiency by catching him whenever he is careless.



## SUPPLIERS OF LEGITIMATE WANTS

EVER since the day when the first infant on earth cried for the moon there have always been persons ready to open negotiations for the attainment of apparently hopeless demands.

If anyone, after consulting many physicians, and finding himself to be worse rather than better, exclaims "Who can heal my complaint?" it is but to discover that the magician exists with the *recipé* of the secret remedy to hand—at a *price*. Similarly, if anyone desires to be a successful journalist or writer of short stories, and is labouring under the continuous depression of each postal delivery, he has but to pay a fee to some school of journalism, in return for which he is initiated into the mysteries of the art by correspondence, with the assurance that before he has completed his exercises he may be earning £10 a week. Or again, if his desire be to figure on the stage, theatrical academies swim into his vision ready, for a fee, to start him on his professional career. Finally, if he needs a job, a need peculiarly prevalent in days of rising unemployment, he will sooner or later see an advertisement inviting him to place his trust in someone or other who, in return for a deposit, will effect the 'Open Sesame' on his behalf.

It is not our business in these pages to defend the credulous against themselves, but it may perhaps be whispered in passing that persons who are anxious to help others to achieve unlikely results in return for a fee, usually extend such help because they have discovered that it pays, and because they have likewise perceived a truth which often escapes the notice of the framers of our penal methods, namely, that the fate of those who are caught in a trap never prevents others offering themselves as candidates for a similar treatment. Thus it pays to advertise, and particularly so in cases where the firm which rakes in the money is immune from the clutches of the criminal code, in that it is altogether impossible to prove any false pretence in its methods. If anyone seriously believes that by the payment of a few pounds he can learn by correspondence what can only, if at all, be acquired in the routine of a newspaper office, he deserves to forfeit the deposit, as surely as do those parliamentary candidates who had the audacity to imagine that they would receive the requisite number of votes to get off scot-free at an election.

So long as flies are willing to accept the invitations of the human spider, it is difficult to suggest that the spiders should give up business and rest from their labours. Occasionally they do so rest—for a fixed period of time; but only in such cases where a counsel for the prosecution can adequately prove that the flies were hoodwinked within the meaning

of the Law. And this, in effect, merely corroborates what we have already stated, namely that the greatest criminals are they who are not caught.

Now it is manifest that in these pages it would be most unwise for the author to write about criminals who are not caught, in that in so doing he might find himself involved in a libel action, nobody caring, for some obscure reason, to be described as a criminal, nor indeed as a saint. Experience has always prompted human beings, like the chameleon, to take the colour of their surroundings, in the hope thereby of escaping notice for so long as possible, it being exceedingly dangerous and awkward on earth to become notorious in any way, the results being, as a rule, either imprisonment, blackmail, or the tedious necessity of continually pretending to be what one is supposed to be with popular consent. Hence the remark that no one is a hero to his valet, which explains the prosperity of valets.

Thus it is a common policy among the wise to remain incognito for as long as possible, especially if the notoriety which lays in wait be that bestowed by newspapers on occupants of the dock; for nothing is more humiliating to an artist than to be obliged, in the interests of self-preservation, to deny his own ability in the witness-box.

Among the suppliers of wants, therefore, to which this chapter is dedicated, we can only instance those whose careers brought them into collision with the prosecuting authorities, it being clearly understood by the readers that others practising the selfsame

tactics are ever working peacefully in the shade, always on the alert, like society beauties, to avoid the hot brilliance of a sudden sunshine, with its devastating habit of putting another complexion on the features of those concerned.

It is the business of some crook suppliers of wants to catch as many of the credulous public as may rise to the bait of their advertisements in the Press, and who may seem to be suitable subjects for their purpose. All that they have to do is to provide themselves with well-equipped offices in a likely part of the town and to set up as agents. That done, they invite those in search of a salaried post to apply, and, provided they be willing to deposit a considerable sum of money—perhaps the total of their savings—in their keeping, or alternatively to invest such in a company recommended by the agents, they will at once engage their services at a weekly wage.

Thus some years ago an elderly man of much experience contrived to run a business called 'The . . . Transfer Agency, Ltd.' Possessed of two West End offices, he purported to deal in a large way with the purchase and sale of property and goods. By means of advertisement he let it be known that he had good jobs to offer. And in this way he successfully persuaded many poor persons to entrust him with substantial deposits, their only security being his assertion that the business was booming. And in order to bolster up the confidence of those who ventured ever so slightly to ask for some

confirmation of his assertion, he would airily remark that he was at that very moment negotiating for £20,000 of hotel property, or taking up the telephone, he would casually mention, after a short conversation with an unseen person, that he had just bought £3,000 of bricks.

Human nature is weak and often amazingly ready to be immediately impressed by utterances of this kind, if made by the right sort of person, seated in the right kind of office, in the right end of the town. The artist in question realized this perfectly, and reaped for a considerable time his appropriate reward.

In the space of the four years preceding his untimely appearance in the dock of the Old Bailey, it was estimated that he had defrauded persons whose confidence he had won of at least £5,244—a small sum, be it said, for so distinguished an artist, if it were indeed the total of his gains; but the Prosecution limits itself very sensibly to what it can actually prove, and leaves the imagination of the reader to fill in the details in a manner creditable to the defendant, who, in English Law, is rightly accorded the benefit of the doubt. On inquiring into the amount of the sales effected by this outwardly booming agency, it was surprising to discover that the total property disposed of in so comparatively lengthy a period of time was, in fact, two coffee-stalls. Apparently the organizer of this successful venture lived on the deposits received, paying out weekly salaries to those who provided

them, their jobs being the inspection of properties in the market. It occasionally happened that two employees met whilst engaged upon inspecting the selfsame property, but in a business of this kind accidents may occur. If they complained about this overlapping of energy, they were dismissed. If they threatened proceedings, they were informed, with perfect truth, that the results of such proceedings to themselves would be negligible; it would indeed be cheaper and wiser not to take them.

The spider who wove this web was, as we have said, an elderly man of mellowed experience. He was an undischarged bankrupt of seventeen years' standing, and had been previously sentenced for similar frauds. Matrimonially speaking, he was a bigamist. That on the top of all this he could produce the above triumph and survive for four years in the heart of the Metropolis, is in itself an encouragement to all good crooks to go full steam ahead, and is an admirable and a convincing tribute to the sportsmanlike methods of the C.I.D. in the national game of 'Hunt the Criminal.'

Once again it is not our business to caution the unwary who are the victims of the artists whose various powers we are seeking to exemplify. But we may perhaps observe that to deposit money in a business, into the credentials of which one has not had inquiries made, can never be described as Christian wisdom.

A somewhat similar case, but one differing in the method employed, came to the notice of the

police quite recently, when a man, sixty-one years of age, a released convict, was sentenced to five years' penal servitude, to be followed by seven years' preventive detention.

After taking offices in the City, this experimenter in finance set up as a dealer in stocks and shares; and when he had got going in this capacity, he set himself to obtain lists of investors in well-known and reputable companies. To these investors he wrote a circular letter informing them that he possessed a client whose wish it was to sell a block of shares in these companies at a bargain price. The investors fell into the trap in large numbers. Letters poured into the office of this master-crook, each writer anxious to be the fortunate winner of the share certificates. Very naturally the spider decided to catch all his flies. He sent another letter telling each applicant that he was the successful candidate, and, provided he first sent his cheque for the amount, he would receive the certificates in due course. Cheques now poured in, as well as letters, but unfortunately for this skilled artist a rumour got around, and forty-two cheques were stopped at the banks. He at once absconded, but was subsequently found and arrested when about to launch another scheme; indeed, three thousand letters were discovered, just about to be posted off to investors.

Earlier in his career, this talented man, who was well-born and who had been educated at King's College, London, had on two occasions made very

brilliant and successful attempts to raise money by the forgery of legal documents, obtaining by this means, in conjunction with colleagues in the second instance, the sum of £26,000. But here again ill-luck dogged his footsteps, and he was caught on the bare evidence of a single £5 note which he had given to a friend when living in apparent safety under an assumed name. This act of generosity cost him six years' penal servitude, but, as has been made very plain, this did not deter him from further activities. Yet another of his schemes was the advertising to let 'a delightful and attractive house' in the suburbs, with every convenience, electric light, garage, and garden, for £60 a year. To this advertisement there were 200 replies, all of which he answered in the affirmative, saying that each of the applicants could have the house in a month's time if he sent a suitable deposit, it being understood that if, after viewing the house, he did not like it, his deposit would be returned. Yet again the money poured in, which was really very remarkable, since, in fact, no house, of the kind advertised existed. But once more he was caught, and one is left wondering whether these get-rich-quick schemes ever pay their inventors sufficiently well to outweigh their corresponding disadvantages. It may be, however, that there comes a time in the careers of great confidence men, when they find themselves obliged to go on practising art for money's sake to an end that is bitter. What retrospects must lend colour to the



tragic solitude of Camp Hill Preventive Detention Prison!

Descending from the heights to slightly lower levels, one finds a man who hit upon the curious device of inserting in a newspaper advertisements of which the following is an example :

‘At a special meeting in connection with the new London Junior Football Club Competition, held at East Ham on Saturday night, it was decided to invite all Junior Clubs from Woolwich and Plumstead districts to compete for a silver cup and silver and gold centre medals for the winners, and silver medals for the runners-up. Entrance fees, each team 4s., to be sent with applications by to-morrow (post only). Average 21 years. Send to Mr. T. S., Secretary (*pro tem.*).’ And an address in Poplar was added.

The result of this and similar advertisements was the reception of a large number of contributions from club secretaries. Another turn in this artist’s repertoire was to walk from town to town and to visit the football clubs, to whom he introduced himself as ‘T.S., the Football Walking Mascot.’ Arrayed in the club colours, he would attend matches, make speeches to the crowds, acquaint them with his records as a walker, and then make a collection. In every sense a protean artist, but subject to recurring rests ‘inside.’

Descending still lower, one discovers a man on the high road to sixty years augmenting his income by

advertising for a housekeeper, and upon applicants calling to see him by appointment, telling each that he had been robbed of his purse, and asking her to accommodate him with a small loan.

He had nine previous convictions of similar little pleasantries.

More sensational, because better conceived, were the methods adopted by a man a few years ago, who, at the time of the Wimbledon Tennis Tournament, inserted in a newspaper an advertisement which ran as follows :

‘Wimbledon. Two debenture seats, ninth row, centre court, south, under cover, whole second week, £15 pair. Col. Royd Walker, St. Hilda’s Hotel, St. Albans.’

A little before the appearance of this advertisement, the gentleman who had inserted it went to the hotel in question and engaged a room there for his uncle, a Colonel Royd Walker, who he said would shortly arrive. Later he called to inform the manageress that his uncle was laid up in a nursing home and would thus be delayed in his arrival. He was then informed, and it is possible that the news afforded him little surprise, that quite a number of telegrams were awaiting his uncle, and also some letters. He said he would take them, remarking casually that his name also was Royd Walker. He called for the next day or so and duly collected the accumulating correspondence. This contained, as it turned out, many money orders, and

he admitted eventually receiving at least £85 by this means.

His defence was that he had hoped to obtain the tickets from a friend, who had let him down, and that he had a debt of £45 to meet. This, however, as it was pointed out, did not in the eyes of the Law justify his invention, or rather resuscitation, of a Colonel Royd Walker who had left this earth, nor did it explain why he had not returned the monies received.

He had no previous convictions, but it was obvious that the talents were there; and there was this in his artistic favour—there was a warrant out for his arrest for obtaining £10 the previous year from the manager of the Piccadilly Hotel. He was sent into retirement for three months.

So much for the art of advertising for rewards. The question whether in the long run it pays for crooks to advertise must be answered individually by those who undertake to augment or create their incomes by these means. On the whole it would seem the better course is to open a school of journalism, a dramatic academy, or simply to sell pills to the general public, for in these cases most assuredly it pays to advertise, and, so far as one knows, no one has ever been sent to prison for convincing persons they can write or act, or for causing them to wish to swallow a new pill, whatever be the results, and be they never so disappointing.

But many artists anxious to supply the needs of the general public find it more convenient to call

in person than to address their would-be customers through the medium of the Press. There are crook travellers, and though their profits may seem small when compared with those to be derived from the ventures we have been considering, they must not on that account be despised or rejected. For is it not the business of the good crook to become all things to all men that haply he may catch some? And not everyone answers advertisements. Some indeed cannot even yet read or write. Thus the crook artist finds it necessary at all times to come down to the level of his audience. It is no good his preaching over their heads in a language not understood by his people. He is an exponent of the vernacular in business life, and it may be his labours will take him to the kitchen rather than to the drawing-room; for maids, like their mistresses, and servants, like their masters, are always ready to surrender to the charms of the charmer, charm he never so humbly.

The commercial travellers of crookdom may be introduced to the reader by a young man whose first appearance in public was made at the South Western Police Court, where it was roughly estimated that he was wanted by the police all over the country for about ninety-nine offences against the Larceny Acts.

His practice was to call upon poor persons to whom he represented himself as being an insurance agent. He offered to lend these persons sums of money from £5 to £10, which he told them they

could repay to him at the rate of half a crown a week, the only condition being that they paid him a preliminary deposit of at least seven shillings.

Poor people are very credulous, and exceedingly apt to place confidence in the assertions of anyone who appears to them to speak with authority. And the clients upon whom this young man called proved no exception to this rule. He reaped the harvest he contemplated. He collected the deposits and was never seen again—not, at least, until his reappearance at the South Western Court, where he received the maximum sentence that can be bestowed by a magistrate, namely, twelve months. Faced with this tribunal of justice, his courage forsook him completely. He collapsed in the dock and had to be supported throughout the proceedings by two gaolers. This was not at all creditable. Possessed of the requisite heartlessness, and that to a marked degree, he was able to rob poor persons of their scanty savings with a proper complacency of mind; but to this should have been added a good deportment in the dock. Society has little use for villains with weak legs. It demands bold bad rogues whose offences it forgives until seventy times seven, but they must possess the courage of their convictions.

Another young man made it a habit to tour around in his car selling wireless parts to would-be purchasers, his speciality being high-frequency chokes marked with the name of 'Lissen,' which he sold at a reduced price.

Actually they were not 'Lissens' at all, and were of little if any practical use; so that in course of time he appeared at Lambeth Court charged with obtaining money by false pretences, and also with the contravening of the Merchandise Marks Act.

His defence was that he had himself believed the goods to be the genuine remainder of a bankrupt stock. The prosecuting counsel contended, however, that his ignorance was feigned, and that he had at least assisted in the special manufacture of the spurious articles in question.

It only remains to be added that the magistrate believed the prosecuting counsel, and the young man retired for two months. He may have thought, as do many chemists, that his little pills were just as good as somebody else's little pills at double or treble the price, and that he was conferring upon the public a boon and a blessing; but his purchasers evidently thought otherwise; for, had they been contented with their bargain, it seems most unlikely that they would have worried over the fact that the name of Mr. Lissen had been taken in vain.

It is only when the patient feels no better after taking some of 'Mr. Carter's' pills that he wants to know whether they really were Carter's; and if he finds they were spurious ones he rushes to the defence of the Merchandise Marks Act. Otherwise he lays low and buys some more. The proof of the pudding is, as ever, in the eating.

Yet another young man of good education found it profitable to call upon the licensees of taverns,

and to represent himself as being a traveller of a Waterford firm of Irish linen manufacturers, and by this means to obtain not only orders but sums of money. He was a painstaking young artist who had not been discouraged by two terms of imprisonment; and when on this occasion he found himself again before a bench of magistrates, he made the modest request that in sentencing him the Chairman would kindly take into consideration 106 other cases. After that the land had rest for one year, and the orders for linen temporarily decreased therein.

It is sometimes convenient to combine the straight and the crooked for the purposes of gain, and to derive an income from such protracted cross-breeding. Thus a man in the autumn of life confessed at Great Marlborough Street to obtaining in a devious way 12 bottles of whisky, 24 bottles of port wine, and 3 bottles of gin, value £12 16s. 5d., from his employers, Wine Growers (1922), Ltd., his method being simply to give the names and addresses of fictitious customers to the orders department, and to receive in return the goods; and, at the other end of the scale, to receive the money from *bona fide* customers in payment of goods delivered, and to keep it. By these means he found that the actual wages he received from his employers were considerably augmented in quite a short space of time.

According to the police records, he had previously been employed by an insurance company,

where he had likewise engaged in works of super-erogation of a somewhat similar kind. He was now, by the advice of Mr. Mead, employed by the Home Office for four months.

It may seem to some readers of this example of fraudulent art that Scotland Yard might with advantage to the general public run a reference department, every employee being required to await a report from that august custodian of characters before his appointment was confirmed. By such means the number of the unemployed, it is true, might increase; but alternatively those who were employed despite their record would stand in a securer relationship to their employers than may many at present.

It is difficult to see why everyone should not have their finger-prints taken, say, at the age of puberty and as an insignia of adolescence. The results would be peculiarly satisfactory. On appointment to a post one would go to the local C.I.D. and present one's fingers for official consideration, and in a very short space of time the Finger Print Department at 'The Yard' would report to one's employer one's relationship, if any, to the Criminal Code.

The *bona fide* artist would thus avoid entangling himself in the meshes of a straight occupation in cases where a reference from 'The Yard' was demanded; while if he could find an employer who would waive such ceremony, he would know that the employer in question would command



very little sympathy if he appeared in Court in the guise of a prosecutor.

The prevalent habit of taking only the fingerprints of convicted persons or those on remand is, like so many of our national habits, exceedingly foolish; for it creates a belief that it is disgraceful to be identified officially, and thereby deprives many righteous persons of the privilege of boasting of the purity of their records in public, or of placing the impress of a finger on their note-paper as the modern equivalent of a crest.

Thus should this suggestion of the author ever become law, persons will be as anxious to produce their finger-prints as they are now reluctant to acknowledge that such records exist; and the habit of looking up the records of one's friends will augment the more melancholy pastime of searching for their wills.

But to return to the commercial travellers. A very good line for an artist to develop is that of selling worthless jewellery at the bargain price of gold; but a great deal of caution is requisite, as the following depressing instance will show.

Two men, hying from the tolerant district of Camden Town, one aged 50 and the other aged 37, were out trading with *gold* bracelets. These they were offering to likely purchasers at the exceedingly reduced price of £1 each. To be perfectly candid, their actual value was 1s. 6d. each, so that the profits on their sale justified the bargain price at which they were being sold to the fortunate buyers.

In this branch of the business everything depends upon selecting good customers, and on the morning in question two such customers hove into sight. They were duly approached and at once expressed an interest in the goods offered. The price was inquired and the usual quotation of £1 was suggested, and all might have been well had not the two customers, by the most outrageous luck that ever dogged struggling artists, been two plain-clothes police officers.

In sentencing these unlucky men to six weeks' imprisonment, the magistrate remarked most rightly, "You made an unfortunate choice." But, as in the case of the vendor of strawberries, accidents will occur.

A still better line in commercial travelling is the sale of violins. There came into a shop in a country town one day an old and somewhat decrepit man carrying a violin. He asked the owner of the shop whether he might leave the instrument in his care while he went to a neighbouring tavern to have a drink. He may possibly have said 'to wet his whistle,' for he was that kind of old man. The shopkeeper acceded to his request, and the fiddle was left upon the counter.

Some little time elapsed, and then a well-dressed man entered to make a purchase, when seeing the violin he began to examine it very closely, asking the shopkeeper whether it was his, "For you doubtless are aware," he said, "that it is an exceedingly valuable one."

"No," replied the shopkeeper, "I was not aware of its value, nor is it mine." And he explained to his customer what had happened.

"That is a pity," said the other; "I would have given you £25 for that fiddle."

Thoughts coursed through the shopkeeper's mind. He became suddenly excited. "Look here," he said to the customer, "will you come back in about an hour, and I will see if I can persuade the old fellow to part with it?"

The customer said he would return, and off he went.

A little later, enter the old and decrepit man again, refreshed and confident.

"I have been thinking," said the shopkeeper, "as how my little boy might like to have a fiddle. Don't suppose you would like to sell me this old one of yours? I will give you twelve and six for it."

"Couldn't let it go at that," replied the old man, "it's worth more to me than that."

"How much more?" asked the other.

"A great deal more."

"Say a quid then?"

"No—nor two neither."

"Three then?"

"No, nor four nor five."

"Ten?"

"That's better, but it's worth more than ten."

"How about fifteen?"

"Not a penny under twenty."

Much depressed, but still confident of a five-pound profit, the shopkeeper paid the old man £20 down, and sent him on his way rejoicing; nor was it until hours had passed, bringing with them no return of the well-dressed stranger, that at length it occurred to the shopkeeper what had happened.

He then communicated with the police, and the story of his sorrow at length reached headquarters in London. But here it was pointed out that after all he had little cause to complain. He had bought a violin for £20 after trying unsuccessfully to defraud a poor and decrepit old man in his cups.

Perhaps in the long run there is a greater appreciation of the artists' work at 'The Yard' than anywhere else; nor is it always sorry to hear of the general public's woes, especially if they be the sorrows of an amateur artist.

One wishes the old man every success, and hopes by this time that he has sold a Cremona or is teaching others in Wandsworth how to do so effectively.

Enhancing the value of goods is an art of itself, and one productive of many a good story.

Not a great while ago, but before a certain well-known firm of stationers began to offer the public moderately large bottles of eau-de-Cologne labelled Johann Maria Farina at the price of half a crown, I happened one day to find myself in company with a friend in a small London tavern. The locality of the tavern is a matter of no importance,

but it was one in which it was possible at times to buy goods at bargain prices from one of its customers who, it was understood, had acquired his stock in a somewhat roundabout way.

One day, therefore, and at the invitation of my friend who knew this convenient pedlar, I was approached by the gentleman in question, who duly produced for my inspection a very neatly packed white-kid sealed bottle of eau-de-Cologne, which he was offering for sale at three shillings and sixpence. He explained that this was an immense bargain, as indeed it appeared to be, with its Farina label and amply proportioned bottle. But in order to leave no doubt upon the subject in the purchaser's mind, he told me in a whisper the alleged source of its origin. It would appear there had arrived at the London docks a large consignment of these bottles, as part of a regular order to the makers at Cologne, from a famous West End dealer in perfumes. Whilst in transit from the docks to the storerooms of the perfumers, a goodly number had been stolen, one of which was now before me. And that was why I was in the enviable position of being able to purchase for a lady friend a seventeen-shilling bottle of eau-de-Cologne for three and sixpence.

I bought the bottle in apparent good faith, not believing it to be stolen property. And the following day I did my best to find another like it, on genuine sale in London. I went first to the West End dealers from whom it was alleged to have been

filched. They naturally disowned it. Their eau-de-Cologne, I was informed, was manufactured specially in England and in accordance with their own *recipé*. I then visited the Army and Navy Stores, Harrods, Boots, and other places of repute. None had ever set eyes on such a bottle, though each at first wondered if it might be a product of one of the others. And as the bottle was as yet unopened, none was offended. I next determined to have it analysed, but was informed that this would be useless if my object were to discover whether it were genuine, as there exists no such article as 'eau-de-Cologne proper.' Hence comparisons, though in this case not odious, are meaningless, there being no standard with which to compare it. So far, all I had positively gathered on authority was that the bottle bore an unusual label.

At length I opened the bottle and sought the opinions of hairdressers. The opinions were not at all flattering. Finally a friend of mine said he thought the smell was lovely, so I gave it him.

Not long after that the selfsame bottles suddenly appeared for sale all over London at the price of two shillings and sixpence. Thus my salesman at the little tavern had made a shilling profit on the retail price, and his purchasers, by way of compensation, had the romance of believing that each one of them had obtained for three shillings and sixpence a bottle of genuine Farina in transit from the docks to Bond Street.

Of all the approved methods of enhancing the

value of goods, none probably is more time-honoured than that practised by the artist who tells a pedestrian that he has just picked up a ring and is uncertain what precisely to do with it.

He may point out to his listener that it would be of little advantage to him to try to pawn it; he may add that it would be equally absurd, if not more so, to hand it to the police; he may further remark that he has little, if any, use for it himself; he may then casually suggest that his companion might care to purchase it, as it looks as if it were a very good ring.

If he has exercised his faculty for sizing up his customers aright, he may then hope to sell the ring at a profit of about fifty times its actual value. This done, and after the purchaser has departed, he produces another ring from his pocket and begins again. And if he tire of rings, he can commence to pick up gold fountain pens, brooches, or even a string of pearls, for there are always passers-by who are ready to compound in the felony of stealing by finding and who want gold rings and fountain pens, and who will agree that it is wasteful to hand in lost property to the police if it can be turned to account without their intermediary assistance.

In the art of enhancing the value of goods, the legitimate tradesman keeps pace with the crook artist up to the point where an article may be represented as being of a superior quality to its actual worth. So and So's jams may be safely advertised as 'the best' in the market without any

fear of a prosecution for false pretences on the part of a consumer or a rival firm. Exaggeration is one thing and misrepresentation quite another, and it is the business of the crook to attain his ends not merely by exaggeration but by misrepresentation.

Thus, quite a nice old man, and a painter of pictures, found by experience that it was much easier and far more profitable to sell his works of art if he said he was Sir William L——, and that his pictures had been hung at the Royal Academy the previous year.

With this recommendation in his favour, he found he could easily say in addition that the picture was valued at a good figure, and that therefore any purchaser would be glad to secure it at, say, a quarter of its true value.

In this way he sold a couple of pictures, valued as he said at £120, for the modest price of £31, to a gentleman in Grosvenor Place.

Unfortunately this last purchaser made inquiries at Burlington House, with the unhappy result that he discovered not only that the pictures which he had purchased had never been hung in that august gallery, but, on further inquiry, that their painter was not and never had been Sir William L——.

Confronted with this very delicate situation, the artist confessed that he had adopted a title out of vanity, but added that he was under the impression that he had only said that his pictures had been exhibited in Scotland and in the provinces. As it



was, he offered to repay the £31 if the matter could be amicably settled in this manner.

The magistrate before whom the case came took into account the age and ill health of the artist, and considered that under the circumstances he might on this occasion be bound over, on the condition that the money was returned, although it was an undeniable fact that only the previous year the old man had been fined £20 at Liverpool for a precisely similar transaction.

Perhaps the aged painter thought he was merely 'puffing his goods' after the manner of any good salesman; but it is doubtful whether it be permissible in the transaction of a deal to puff oneself into the ranks of the knighthood for the purpose of effecting a profitable sale.

Many practitioners of the art, however, do find it convenient to confer upon themselves such titles, which leads one to suspect that this veteran art-ist is worthy to be enrolled in our collection of wide-awake personalities.

Other painters may easily be of assistance, usually at a very low fee, to the crook whose occupation it is to supply the parvenu with ancestral portraits. This is in reality a part of the business of the purveyors of family-trees and unsuspected lineages. It is always pleasant, if one's grandfather were a village greengrocer, to be informed that actually he was a direct descendant of the famous Comte de Pomme de Terre, a natural son of a defunct monarch. One buys the genealogy for a round

sum from one crook, and an oil painting of 'the Comte' from another. One is quite happy until the news leaks out. As a rule no prosecution ensues.

The artist is never on safer ground than when he makes his clients ridiculous. It is a form of crookery to be highly recommended.

But enough has been said upon the art of supplying legitimate demands. There is scope in this department of the profession, as will have been seen, for all manner of talents; and with human credulity as a gilt-edged security it is not surprising that a large number of workers are content to labour in this remunerative field.

It will now be our business to consider the methods of those whose object it is to supply *illicit* demands in a manner and at a price profitable to themselves.

## SUPPLIERS OF ILLICIT DESIRES, AND BLACKMAILERS<sup>1</sup>

IN any country like our own, where the criminal law reflects in parts the determination of organized minorities to attempt to enforce upon a whole community ways of thinking that are very wide of general acceptance, it must needs follow that a large amount of secret law-breaking exists.

Thus it is the business of one branch of the crook enterprise to supply such illicit needs and desires at a price highly advantageous to itself; and it is the business of another branch to obtain money from such customers by threat of exposure, a very remunerative undertaking in that very few persons are at all anxious to seek the protection of the police authorities, if by so doing they find themselves obliged to confess, or at any rate suggest, that their behaviour falls short of that level of conventionality to which it is the wish of most persons to appear to conform.

And in practice the thing which no one is willing to admit in this country is that he has committed, or has been party to the committing

<sup>1</sup> The author hopes that those of his readers who dislike unsavoury subjects will refrain from the perusal of this chapter. It is essential to the study of the subject of this book or he would gladly have omitted it.

of: (1) any so-called 'unnatural offence,' (2) an illegal operation, (3) the purchase or selling of any so-called indecent photographs or instruments, (4) the obtaining of prohibited drugs, or (5) any form of behaviour which, though not illegal, is derogatory to his reputation in the eyes of those whose approval he values.

It is the business of the blackmailer, therefore, to watch the private behaviour of those persons whom he may deem it worth his while to threaten with exposure.

For all practical purposes blackmail consists in putting any person in such a state of fear that he submits to any demands made upon him as an alternative to the carrying out of the blackmailer's threat, either to make public some incident in his life which he desires to remain in oblivion, or to charge him with some offence which, though he may never have committed it, the mere suggestion that he had would endanger his reputation.

As a general rule persons are blackmailed for behaviour in which they have indulged, but the most sensational case of blackmail in the past few years centred round the person of an elderly gentleman who, according to all reports, did nothing more damaging to his reputation than to walk unsuspectingly into a trap laid for him by a very redoubtable gang of professional crooks. It happened thus.

A gentleman of advancing years came up to

London for the night, and spent the evening witnessing the performance at the Palace Theatre.

It so happened that the seat next to his own was occupied by a young man in the early twenties with whom, during the interval, he got into conversation, with the result that at the close of the performance they walked together as far as Knightsbridge, the gentleman having taken a room at the Hyde Park Hotel, and the young man being on his way home to his room near Victoria Station. On their way the youth told the gentleman that he had been at one time in the Navy, and that at the moment he was an assistant to an Art dealer. He added that he would like to find a better job, and the gentleman said that he might be able to help him to do so.

Before parting for the night, the gentleman expressed the hope that they might meet again, and go perhaps to a theatre, and the young man gave him his address so that he could write if he wished and let him know when he would be next coming up to Town.

This the gentleman promised to do, and he fulfilled his promise about a fortnight later, when he wrote asking the young man to meet him at half-past eight on a particular evening outside Knightsbridge Tube Station.

The young man kept the appointment, and on meeting his host the latter at once explained to him that he had not as yet taken a room for the night, so that before they went to any show he

thought it would be best for them to take a taxi and drive to his club, where he had left his bag, and then proceed to an hotel.

It was then that the young man told the gentleman that he had access to a room belonging to his brother in Soho, and that the simplest thing for him to do would be to leave the bag there while they went to a theatre near at hand, and then he could collect it afterwards.

To this proposal the gentleman consented. They went first to his club and then to the room in Soho, which turned out to be a small bedroom on an upper floor of a house in Compton Street.

Arrived there, they sat and talked for about ten minutes, for the young man seemed very anxious to discuss the prospects of a future job, and to solicit the gentleman's aid in obtaining it.

Whilst thus engaged in conversation in this bedroom, the door suddenly opened and there entered upon the scene two men, one about the age of thirty-six and the other much younger. Addressing the gentleman, the elder of these two said very peremptorily, "What is happening here? What are you doing with my brother? I shall have to call the police!" The gentleman at once protested that there was nothing and had been nothing in his behaviour to merit such questions, far less to suggest the implication of impropriety. But the elder of the two intruders declined to accept his explanation, finally saying that if the gentleman wished to avoid a scandal, he could only do so by

writing out a cheque on the spot for £50. Faced with this exceedingly awkward situation, and unable to see how to get out of the house to which he now realized he had been decoyed and entrapped, he opened his bag, took out his cheque-book, wrote a cheque payable to himself, endorsed this, and handed it to the elder of the two men.

With this he was suffered to depart, the young man remaining behind with his two confederates, from whom he received a third share of the proceeds of the evening's work when the cheque was cashed the following day.

It appears that the young man in the twenties who had acted the part of the decoy, had met the elder of the other two confederates soon after the gentleman's first visit to London, and that he had been given a key to this room so that he could make use of it as occasion might demand, it being the business of its owner to watch for the arrival of any customer whom it had been previously arranged to decoy there, in order to interrupt in the manner already related.

So far, so good; but if the gentleman who had stepped into the trap imagined that the matter had ended at this point, he was very soon to discover that in this comfortable surmise he was gravely mistaken.

In writing to the young man to fix their second meeting, he had, perhaps not very wisely, supplied him with his home address. Thus it at once became the business of the eldest of the three confederates,

himself a professional blackmailer of wide experience, and one skilled in the direction of affairs of this kind, to make tactful inquiries into the social and financial status of this retired country gentleman. And his inquiries led him to the opinion that it would be well worth while to continue operations.

A week later, therefore, and taking with him the other young man who had burst into the room in his company, he descended on the gentleman's country house, and on being shown into his presence, and still posing as the elder brother of the young decoy, he told him that as a result of what had occurred on the evening in question, he had decided that it would be better to send his young brother out of the country, that he had found an opening for him at Algiers, that the cost of his journey and his outfit would amount to £95, and that he must ask the gentleman kindly to hand him a cheque for that amount.

The gentleman, unaware possibly that it is part of the science of blackmail to talk of removing the embodiment of inconvenient memories to a distant quarter of the globe, fell a second time into the trap, and thinking very likely that in this case distance would certainly lend enchantment to the view, agreed to banish the young man for £95, hoping that this would be the end of the whole matter. In this he was again deceived.

Within the space of only a few days the two confederates were back again. The job obtained was in Cairo, not Algiers, and a further £81 would



be required. The gentleman, one imagines, raised serious objections to these further demands upon his purse. After all, why should he assist at all in the financing of the young man's future? The answer was a reminder that he had seriously compromised the young man's immediate past. And if he denied that there were any truth in such allegations, it would only be to be reminded of the scene in the Soho bed-chamber. "Why had he gone there? Could he not have left his bag at the club or in the cloak-room of the theatre?"

Haunted by this fatal memory, the gentleman again wrote a cheque for the sum demanded.

But a day or so later the 'elder brother' was back again, and this time accompanied by a woman whom he introduced as his wife, and who he said was ill and worried in consequence of their being obliged to give up their rooms in the house in Soho, the landlord having heard of the gentleman's visit there, and having formed the opinion that his house was being put to improper purposes.

Again the gentleman demurred, but only to be met this time with a threatening demand for £120 on the spot. He yielded. And the result was the news, in a few days conveyed to him by the elder brother in person, that his wife had succumbed to the worry of the move, and had died, and that her funeral expenses amounted to £200.

So the gentleman had to bury her.

After this, by way of variation, the younger confederate would sometimes call alone; and,

without any actual threats, would plead his financial straits; and quite successfully, for it was obvious by this time that the gentleman had a greater terror of what his visitors might do than of yielding to their demands, no matter what those demands might be.

And so it went on for about a year and a half, when a new visitor arrived, who announced himself to be the 'father' of the original young man in the twenties. He said he had heard with dismay of his son's methods of life (the young man having apparently returned from Algiers) and that he was most anxious to send both him and his other young friend out of the country. He could not afford to do so himself, but he felt confident that the gentleman would be willing to help him to do so; and in this surmise he was correct, for the gentleman at once gave him a cheque for £60, adding that he would forward the rest of the money requisite when he had seen the receipt for the outfits needed. Eventually he sent another £36, and for the next six months was left entirely in peace.

The next episode was a call from the original young man in the twenties, and a woman whom he introduced as his wife. He explained that he had been to Australia, but not finding any suitable work there had returned, and intended now, with the gentleman's help, to give the United States a trial, as his wife had relatives in that go-ahead country. Again the thought of placing the Atlantic between himself and his chief assailant encouraged

the gentleman to write a further cheque for £61. But the results were disappointing, as only a month or so later the young man reappeared with the younger of the two confederates, and with a new personage who described himself as a detective of the Metropolitan Police. This latter man explained his somewhat disarming presence by telling the gentleman that he was contemplating arresting the original young man for stealing some bonds from a lady, but that the lady was willing to waive the prosecution if the money value of the misappropriated bonds were restored to her. It was suggested, therefore, that it might be good policy on the gentleman's part if he gave the young man £850 to hand to the lady, and £250 to pay the expenses of the detective.

The gentleman, after listening to this calm request, asked why on earth he should be called upon to pay the lady's losses; the reply was that if he did not, and the young man were arrested, so much more might come to the knowledge of the police, in addition to his theft of the bonds.

The gentleman wrote another two cheques, but only on the clear understanding that this ended the whole affair. He was assured that this would be the case. Imagine, therefore, his feelings when, only three days later, he was called upon again, and after being shown two letters, one addressed to a lady friend of his, and the other addressed to the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, each accusing him of a crime, was bluntly told that

both of these letters would be immediately posted unless he at once wrote a cheque for £2,000.

The fact that he wrote it is itself a commentary on the state of his mind. Further demands followed to the tune of another £2,000, one pretext advanced being the fact that the detective had been dismissed from the Force for his hand in defeating the purposes of Justice, and that it was up to the gentleman to see that he was not the loser thereby.

The next move in the game was the engagement by the confederates of a well-known burglar temporarily out of work, who agreed to play the rôle of another detective, who, calling on the gentleman, informed him that he knew all about the gentleman's difficulties, a statement which, though it may have caused its hearer a little surprise, would not have unduly shocked him, because, as a member of the general public, he would have been educated in the belief that every officer at Scotland Yard is omniscient. He went on to explain that for a consideration he was quite sure he could square the matter once and for all. And lest there should be any doubt concerning his ability, he displayed his visiting card, on which there was printed under his name: 'Blackmail a speciality.'

Buoyed up with the hope of a dying man who is given one last chance by Harley Street, the gentleman gave the detective £1,400, an act on his part which was, perhaps, all things considered, not

very complimentary to Scotland Yard. However, it gave him another six months' peace.

Then, the following January, by way of a New Year's greeting, the detective called again, with the dismal news that his efforts had failed and that it was his painful duty to inform the gentleman that fresh demands were looming in the near future.

Mindful, however, of his own ends, the detective now advised the gentleman to come with him to London, and there to consult a *bona fide* solicitor of the Temple. For the bestowal of this advice and his future services, he wanted the gentleman to advance him a considerable loan; but instead, and perhaps very sensibly, he was offered a sum of £100 down as a gift.

The solicitor wrote letters to the other members of the gang, telling each of them that unless their blackmailing operations ceased, proceedings would be taken against them.

As a result, the 'father' of the young man in the twenties, and the young man himself, called on the solicitor. They said it was impossible that the gentleman named could have urged the dispatch of these letters, and that someone must have impersonated him. They were assured that that was not the case. They then threatened themselves to go to Bow Street Police Court and lay information against the gentleman. This the solicitor strongly advised them to do.

Instead, they went to the gentleman's country house, where, finding him out, they left a letter

containing a copy of a large poster on which was printed in black letters on a yellow background: 'The Villainous Story of Mr. —, of —, by —,' and a threat to post this up all over the town unless they received £3,000.

But in the meanwhile, the solicitor, thinking that the matter had assumed serious proportions, notified the Director of Public Prosecutions, to whom in due course the gentleman himself made a long and considered statement.

The blackmailers themselves had also been rendered uneasy by the arrest of two of their gang, the young man's wife and her brother, these being sentenced to three years' penal servitude. Nor were their fears without basis, for in the possession of the brother were found two five-pound notes, which, on being traced by the authorities, were discovered to be a portion of a hundred such notes paid to one of the gang at the order of the gentleman of our narrative.

The gang temporarily dispersed, and their familiar haunts in the West End were emptied of their presence. But the C.I.D. officers, knowing perfectly well that the way to catch a crook is to pretend not to look for him, bided their time, with the inevitable result that in due course the return of the 'father,' the young man himself, and both 'detectives' was reported, and their arrest speedily followed.

The finding of the other young man and the 'elder brother' proved to be a more arduous task,

but the day at length arrived when all six confederates faced the Lord Chief Justice in No. 1 Court at the Old Bailey.

All were duly found guilty. And all listened with attention to the words addressed to them from the Bench.

"It is not my purpose," said the Lord Chief Justice, "to waste words upon any of you. You have been found guilty upon the clearest possible evidence of a series of offences which I do not hesitate to describe as the worst of their kind in my experience of more than twenty-five years at the Bar and on the Bench. You have pursued this wretched man relentlessly over a period of three and a half years, employing every varying device which ingenuity and relentlessness could suggest to you. I have no observations to make to you, but in the public interest there are two observations I do desire to make. It is difficult to understand why persons who are tortured in the way the victim in this case has been tortured, do not come forward and lay the facts frankly and fully before their solicitors or the police, or both. They can then, I am sure, rely upon the discretion of the Press; and if they are prepared to take that course they will have done something to stamp out one of the worst pests of contemporary civilization. It is clearly necessary, in view of the evidence in this case, that these men, and each of them should be put in a place of safety for a considerable time, partly in order that the public may be protected against their skill,

and partly in order that other persons like these defendants may be a little discouraged in their enterprise, actual or contemplated."

The Lord Chief Justice then sentenced the gang as follows: the 'screwsman' who had played the part of the detective from Scotland Yard received 8 years' penal servitude; the member of the fraternity who posed as the other detective with regard to the story of the lady and her misappropriated bonds received 10 years' penal servitude; the 'father' of the young man received 15 years'; the younger confederate 10 years', and the young man in the twenties, the original decoy, 12 years'. The elder confederate, the brains of the business, received penal servitude for life.

Without doubt, artists of this high order of skill may have expected suitable recognition of their talents, but it is possible that they may have underestimated the appreciation of the Judge until he had passed sentence upon them. It is likewise possible that the Judge himself underestimated their abilities until he had been informed of the previous records of achievement of some of them, in the same department of the profession.

Of all the members of the gang, he who perhaps presents the greatest interest was the player of the part of the 'father.' He had had previous experience as a burglar, a robber with violence, and as a professional importuner of male persons. He specialized, likewise, in the 'husband trick,' persuading the woman with whom he lived to



decoy back to their rooms customers suitable for the purposes of blackmail. He also made it a habit to train young lads who were professional importuners to let him know the names of their customers for the furtherance of his schemes. He was thus a highly proficient exponent of the full possibilities of the science of the blackmailer.

Of all these shining lights, only one could lay valid claim to being an Old Borstalian, namely, the player of the part of the first detective in the unfolding of the story.

It may be observed that despite the sentences passed on this occasion, the science of blackmail still flourishes. Neither the victims nor the practitioners seem to be at all sensibly impressed by the Judge's words. Risks on both sides appear to be cheerfully taken.

In the case we have been considering it was emphasized in the Court that the behaviour of the country gentleman had never brought him within the scope of the criminal code; that he had in fact done nothing else than place himself in a situation which was capable of being misconstrued and made the basis of a false accusation. And that sooner than explain this to the Police he preferred first to pay £10,800 to his blackmailers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A crook on friendly terms with the decoy at the time has since told the author what he was told actually occurred in the room in Soho. If his account be true, the gentleman, though innocent of any breach of the Law, was inveigled into presenting himself to the intruders under circumstances more favourable to them than might appear from the evidence adduced at their trial.

As a general rule, crooks rely upon customers who may be calculated to be less comfortable when the moment comes for them to deny on oath in Court the counter-allegations of the defendants.

Some years ago a young man of pleasing manners and independent habits was informed by a companion possessed of similar tastes how very easy it was to earn a living compatible with personal liberty and leisure by permitting gentlemen of position to commit indiscretions with oneself of an illicit kind, and then to scare them with threats of exposure to the police unless they were prepared to make one a suitable allowance as the price of one's silence.

This information struck the young man to whom it was vouchsafed as a capital idea, worthy of the most careful consideration. And from that moment onwards he sought about for some means by which to give it practical effect. Nor did he have to wait very long, for one day, when sauntering about in a provincial town, he espied, sitting upon a seat, an elderly clergyman of obviously unconventional type whom he could not but observe seemed to be taking an interest in himself. So he allowed himself to be drawn into conversation with this stranger, and what was more, he accepted an invitation to meet him again the same afternoon. This rendezvous he kept, and the clergyman took him to a teashop, where they chatted together in the most amicable fashion, and on emerging from the shop they visited for a few moments one of those public

places which it is the duty of every municipality to provide for the convenience of its ratepayers. The clergyman wished him good-bye, not, however, before he had given him his name and the address of the country vicarage at no great distance from the town where he lived and worked among his parishioners.

This happy little tribute of trust afforded the young man much satisfaction, for it occurred to him at once that the incumbent of a country vicarage is, all things considered, a very suitable person to blackmail, for he has every incentive to avoid a scandal, and he is unable, without great difficulty, to run away. Thus the following day he called at the Vicarage, and, on being shown into the Vicar's study, he told the good man that the most dreadful thing imaginable had happened.

Much moved by the explosion of this preliminary bombshell, the Vicar inquired with much anxiety what precisely had transpired. "Just this," said the young man; "I have discovered that I am being followed by detectives. I dare not go to the room where I have been staying, and the result is that I have had to leave in it all my clothes and all my savings, which amount to £60. And the worst of it all is that I have found out that two detectives were watching us both yesterday afternoon, so that if I am arrested they will want you too."

Terrified out of his life, the Vicar then and there wrote three cheques, one for £30, one for £20, and

one for £10, all of which he cashed at different shops in the village, handing the proceeds to the young man, who, remarking that he dared not risk going by train, chartered a car and departed for the Metropolis.

Two days later he was back at the Vicarage again, when he induced the Vicar to put him up for the night on the plea that the car had broken down. And the next morning he expressed his intention of going to America if the Vicar would give him £40, it being, as we have said before, a very good move in the science of blackmail to offer to quit the country. The Vicar rose to the bait and the youth departed with the money; total profits up to the moment being £100; time spent in earning the same, two days. He decided, however, not to go to America, and instead settled down quite comfortably in the old country, his occupation for the next year being the writing of a series of letters to the Vicar at short intervals. It was a highly remunerative task, for it secured him another £853.

But at this point he received his first warning to stop, in the shape of a solicitor's letter; in reply to which he wrote acknowledging that his statements had been untrue, and promising that in future he would cease from molesting their client any more. And had he been a more experienced artist than he was, he would have at once commenced a fresh campaign in some other quarter. He did, in fact, stop for nearly a year; but at length he paid another call at the Vicarage, and, possibly to his surprise,

was rewarded with £10 for his courage in so doing. This naturally emboldened him to call again, though he took the precaution on this occasion to bring a confederate who waited outside. This man, he explained, was an ex-policeman who knew rather too much, a piece of information which it turned out was worth £26.

After this he reopened his correspondence, and began once more to talk of going abroad. And so it went on until the Vicar, after removing from the Vicarage and selling all he possessed, had at length parted altogether with £1,367.

Finally the old man, broken in health and ruined, reached that danger point when the fear of the blackmailer becomes greater than the fear of the police. He suddenly gave way, and became Mr. X at the Old Bailey. And the young man retired to penal servitude for seven years; his mistake being that he did not stop in time after receiving a warning.

That it may be most unwise to blackmail a married man for clandestine relations with a woman other than his wife was shown a few years ago, when two young men endeavoured to obtain money from a middle-aged gentleman by threatening to cite him as the co-respondent in some divorce proceedings which were pending.

A young woman of thirty, whose habit it was to attend public dances in a large provincial city, became much enamoured with one young dancing partner, and an object of great attraction to

another. She likewise found favour in the eyes of a middle-aged married man who, in order to mark his appreciation of her charms, established her in a flat in London and made her an allowance.

The young woman was herself married, but divorce proceedings were in progress against her, her husband having obtained a decree nisi, but not as yet a decree absolute.

Established in her flat in Town, and visited only at intervals by her middle-aged protector, she very naturally invited her young lover to stay with her. He accepted the invitation gladly, being at the time without any visible means of support other than herself. They were fairly happy together in a Bohemian way. Occasional brawls took place, and one evening he attacked her with an umbrella, but that was only because he was a little excited with drink. Otherwise they got along quite well, though she had to change her flat as the landlord said he made too much noise.

At her new flat she afforded hospitality for a while to the other young man in a similar manner, he being, however, more in love with her than she with him. This young admirer was fairly well acquainted with the tactics of crookdom, for he had acquired merit in a small way on one or two occasions in the stealing and receiving line of the profession. Unfortunately he had a weakness for the bottle, which is a failing utterly fatal to a crook's success, wideawakeness being in his case the criterion of salvation.

It was this second young man who hit upon the idea of getting some money out of the middle-aged gentleman whom his inamorata always referred to as 'Daddy,' whilst insisting that their relationship was that of a father and his daughter.

Whilst not denying this, the young man probably thought the gentleman's wife would be disinclined to accept this explanation if it became public, and that it was quite likely that the gentleman himself might be unwilling to put her credulity to the test. Thus he rang up the gentleman, and after arranging a meeting, commenced by inquiring for the address of the young woman, and, on being asked by what authority he sought for this information, he said he was the husband of the young woman.

"In that case," replied the gentleman, "you are divorced and have no cause to interfere in what no longer concerns you."

This reply was so disconcerting in its abruptness that the young man confessed that he was not the husband, but merely a detective employed by him to get fresh evidence, as the divorce proceedings had broken down. He then added that he would be willing to drop the whole matter if the gentleman would lend him £50 on the security of an insurance policy. And to this proposition the gentleman agreed, saying that he should have a cheque for £30 if he signed a statement acknowledging that the relations between the gentleman and the young woman had been entirely proper, and promising not to molest him any further. He

should then have another cheque for £20 when he had handed over the security mentioned.

The young man signed the statement, and in company with the other young man went off to a northern city, where they lived riotously on the proceeds for the space of a few days. The money being by this time exhausted, he wrote for the remaining £20, promising to post on the policy by return. He duly received the £20, but the gentleman did not receive the policy.

It now became necessary for the young men to devise fresh tactics, so it was decided that the other young man should call upon the gentleman, which he did, travelling to London for the purpose. Like his companion, he first inquired for the address of the lady, but receiving a very curt reply and a command to go away, he retired temporarily, not, however, without first saying in a sneering way, "You think you are very clever, but I shall get you yet," quite a good remark to let fall when dealing with the right sort of person, but in this case rather a mistake, for he should have borne in mind that the gentleman had no cause to fear the police. Quite otherwise, for after he had again been called upon by this young man, he paid a call himself at Vine Street Police Station without telling him anything about it. Meanwhile the young man decided to play the next card in the blackmailer's hand, which as we have said is nearly always a request for the fare to the Colonies, for most victims find the thought of transporting their



tormentor beyond the seas wellnigh irresistible. Thus he demanded the fare to Canada, and the gentleman gave him £35 in a small hotel where he had invited him to discuss the situation. On quitting the hotel the young man was arrested by two police officers and asked to explain the origin of the £35 in his pocket; a conundrum which he found it beyond his powers to solve in a manner satisfactory to his hearers.

In due course the principals in this little drama assembled at the Old Bailey, the gentleman and the lady appearing as witnesses for the prosecution, and the two young men as the defendants in the dock. Both the defendants were found guilty. It then transpired that their artistic claims to merit differed profoundly.

The first young man had commenced his professional career by stealing a cheque, for which he had been bound over. A year later he had gone to prison for a month for stealing and receiving two brooches and a gold watch. On his release he stole a cigarette-case, and, like the Biblical sow, 'returned to his vomit' for another two months. He had also convictions for drunkenness, which are never creditable to a crook. When a dancing instructor, he had prevailed upon a young woman to steal £60 from her parents and hand it to him, a tribute to his charm of personality. On the whole, therefore, he had much to his credit. He now retired from the public gaze for twenty months.

His companion had nothing previously to his

credit at all, and seemed genuinely ashamed of his behaviour from start to finish, a fact which leads one to surmise that he had not the makings of a good artist. Evidently the Judge thought the same, for he would only allow him to remain in prison for ten months.

The gentleman, after all this, presumably returned to his wife, and the young woman to her flat, there like Mariana in her moated grange to ponder in solitude on the ways of men.

‘And she only said “I’m weary,  
And he comes not,” so she said.’

That even housemaids are not exempt from the consideration of the blackmailer was made evident not a great while ago by one of their contingent receiving a letter one day asking for money. And since she did not answer it promptly, she received another, which ran as follows :

‘Prepare yourself. I have warned you, that unless you reply by return of post to this letter, I shall feel justified in giving information to your mistress and the police. So if you are wise, do as I ask you, as you are liable to imprisonment, and there are three others willing to give evidence against you. Kindly reply G.P.O., —, not later than Saturday morning, or it will be the worse for you.’

Faced with this cheerful correspondence, the young housemaid naturally felt the need of police

protection even more than housemaids usually do. So she took the letter she had received to the Police Station with greater confidence of being affably received than may be the case with many of those who make such pilgrimages.

By the advice of the police, she sent an answer to the letter, worded in this manner:

‘I don’t know you, but I am very frightened. Please don’t go to the police. I am very happy in my situation. I can’t understand what you want. I am a working girl and cannot do much. Please tell me what you want me to do.’

And would you believe it! Back came a letter demanding the payment of £250!

Quite rightly the clumsy fellow got 21 months’ imprisonment for playing his cards so disgracefully badly.

We may now bring before the reader a case which, perhaps more than any other we have collected, displays those virtues of mercilessness and audacity so necessary to those whose aim it is to specialize in this department of the profession. One cannot indeed refrain in this instance from expressing admiration for the courage of the prosecutors, for they had to face a situation in Court, the mere thought of which usually deters a victim from trying to fight his assailant in public. The fact that the blackmailer in this case was run to earth was due, not to his lack of ability, but to the exceptional courage of the two prosecutors, who

happened to do what nine out of ten persons may be safely calculated never to do, otherwise the art of blackmail would languish, for it would cease to pay.

The artist in this drama at the time of its occurrence was thirty years of age, and had served at one period of his career in the Guards, and at other times had earned a livelihood as a valet and as an hotel servant. This did not, however, prevent him supplementing his income in a manner by no means unfamiliar to other men of a like bearing and experience, who find it convenient to steal the property of customers who are most unlikely to take legal proceedings against them.

About this time this young ex-guardsman had two adventures with two persons of widely differing social standing. The one was a gentleman who was a member of a West End club, and the other was a valet living at his master's town residence.

In the former case, according to his own statement, he met the gentleman at Oxford Circus Tube Station, and after getting into conversation with him, prevailed upon him to accompany him back to a room he occupied near the Marble Arch. The gentleman promised to assist him in finding a job, and, so he alleged, offered him a present of £10 if in return he would oblige him by performing a slight service, a suggestion, be it said, which the gentleman most resolutely denied on oath at the Old Bailey. At any rate, as a result of this alleged visit to his room, or by other means

unrevealed to the public, the ex-guardsman succeeded in obtaining some letters and a letter-case containing £2, the property of the gentleman in question.

Becoming in this way acquainted with his name and address, his next step was to ring up the gentleman at his club, saying that the letters and letter-case were safely in his possession, and that he was quite ready to forward them to their rightful owner if he would permit him to keep the £2 in the case, and would send him another £5. The gentleman, being anxious to recover his property, agreed to this proposal. He telephoned the £5 and awaited the arrival of the letters and the letter-case. Since, however, they did not arrive, he reported the matter to the police.

A few days later the ex-guardsman rang up again. He acknowledged the safe arrival of the £5, and asked for some more money to be sent, adding that he would call upon the gentleman at his private address. Instead, he wrote three days afterwards returning the letters, but saying that he should retain the case until he had received another £3. He added by way of postscript that he would be leaving shortly for Edinburgh, thereby conforming to the traditional moves in the game.

Under the instructions of the police, the gentleman sent him a telegram to a prearranged post office. The man duly collected it and was soon after arrested in consequence.

His other adventure had likewise originated at

Oxford Circus, where he got into conversation with a valet who was looking at the goods displayed in a shop window. Representing himself to be a Scotsman in solitude in London, he very easily paved the way for an invitation to return to the valet's place, with the further prospect of spending the evening in his company at a music-hall. But the valet, finding on their return that he would not be free that evening after all, prepared to wish his guest farewell, after expressing a hope that they might meet again in Scotland, whither he was shortly bound.

It was then that the ex-guardsman suddenly turned to him and said, "I want some money." And on the valet inquiring "Why?" the man replied, "Come along, pay up, and don't moan about it."

Much disturbed, and, above all, anxious now to get rid of such an undesirable guest, the valet reluctantly produced a ten-shilling note, only to discover that his offer was treated with contempt.

"What will your employer say if he hears that you brought me here?" asked the other. "Especially if I tell him you asked me here for improper purposes?"

By this time the valet was scared out of his wits, and made a second offer of £4 10s. But his guest said it should be £5 or nothing.

With this sum he condescended to depart, not without saying, however, that he should want some more later on. And after he had left, the valet

discovered that his gold watch and chain, his cigarette-case, and a cheque-book were likewise conspicuous by their absence.

Such, then, were the tactics employed by this very interesting young ex-guardsman.

When placed in the witness-box he very naturally insisted on oath that the behaviour of his prosecutors had not been so innocent as they wished it to appear. But as the counsel for the prosecution pointed out, "it is the stock-in-trade of a black-mailer to become acquainted by some means with his victim, and then by threats of exposure to demand money from him," one of those comfortable legal explanations which, when carefully analysed, leaves its hearers undecided as to what extent, if any, it has any bearing upon any given situation.

The Judge, however, accepted the assurance of the prosecutors that in this case they had indeed been the innocent victims of a skilful and pains-taking artist. And we may safely leave the matter there.

The young ex-guardsman received a sentence of ten years' penal servitude as a reward merited by his talents.

We have quoted this example of the science of blackmail because we believe that it exhibits faithfully a line of criminal art that flourishes like a green bay-tree, and which is largely, though not designedly, protected by the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885, Section II.

A similar sentence of ten years' penal servitude

was passed recently on a man who decided to turn to his own advantage certain actions which he observed a householder performing when he (the observer) was engaged on working on the outside of the house, and chanced to look in at one of the windows.

In this instance the occupant of the house, a clergyman, was doing nothing that was in any sense contrary to the Law, but which was nevertheless something which, if known to the more narrow-minded of his parishioners, would in their eyes militate against his reputation as a shepherd of his flock.

Realizing this, the workman approached the unfortunate clergyman, and, after telling him what he had observed, he asked him what he proposed to do in order to keep his mouth shut. The clergyman pointed out to him that this was blackmail, but the workman replied that it was only a very mild form of that applied science, in that a payment of £5 would settle their little account once and for all.

Hoping that this might be true, the clergyman paid the sum of £2 as an initial contribution. But the workman, who had by this time intellectually crossed the frontier of Crookdom, determined, and from the standpoint of the inhabitants of Crookdom determined very sensibly, to regard the blackmailing of this clergyman, at any rate for the time being, as his *modus vivendi*. He accordingly asked for more. And since his request was granted, he



went on asking until he had received the sum of £100.

But as we have already pointed out, so many artists in this line come to grief through being unable to stop at the psychological moment and by committing tactical errors. Thus this workman, growing bolder than he should have, actually wrote the clergyman a letter threatening to expose him to his Bishop unless he sent him by a certain date a further £20.

Very naturally, being a poor man and having already parted with nearly all his savings, the clergyman on receipt of this letter came to the conclusion that there are worse agonies than the risk of public exposure. He explained his plight both to his Bishop and to the police. Result: Retirement of a working man aged twenty-nine for ten years, minus one-quarter's remission for good conduct inside.

Without doubt the beginning and ending of the blackmailer's wisdom consists in knowing when to stop, and this knowledge depends upon a very careful observation of his customers, the extent of their means, the balance of their minds, and their relationships to their social surroundings.

In close alliance with, if not actually in confederacy with, the blackmailer are those who earn a living by supplying the illicit wants of their fellow-beings.

First among these may be mentioned the vendors of those photographic studies which are more easily

to be obtained in Paris than in London, and which, if ordered from abroad by English customers, are apt to go astray in the post and get delivered at police headquarters. Hence there is scope for the home manufacturer of these curious photographs.

From the standpoint of the crook, one of the greatest advantages of this trade is that the customers in many cases write letters to the photographer, containing not merely their names and addresses, but a fair indication of the range of their imaginations. These letters may be very valuable should the photographer at any time be in any immediate need of cash. Some of the writers may be only too willing to purchase back their letters in order personally to commit them to the flames; for most people are afraid *not* of being what they seem to be, but of seeming to be what they are in a land so pledged to Respectability.

Mr. Basil Tozer in his *Confidence Crooks and Black-mailers* tells a pleasant little story of the method of certain well-dressed, well-educated men who make it their business to cultivate the friendship of elderly men of assured bank balances, chiefly in hotels. As the acquaintanceship deepens, the crook artist takes the opportunity to show his newly found friend a photograph on the chance that he may be interested in such productions of art. If he be, he is then informed that his mentor knows of a man who can supply him with a selection, only that of course they are expensive. An appointment

is made, and all three men meet in a small and somewhat shady hotel. The elderly man selects his photographs, pays for them, puts them in his pocket, and is given a receipt.

The two artists may then suddenly say they are police officers, specially detailed to run this illicit trade to earth, the penalty of which, they tell him, is imprisonment, but that if the gentleman cares to give them, say, £100 down, it might be worth their while to overlook his indiscretion on this occasion; but that if not, he had better consider himself under arrest. Faced with this situation, the dupe will very likely make the payment demanded, nor can he possibly go to the police should he, on second thoughts, realize that he has walked into a trap, for how can he bring himself to confess that it was his object that evening to purchase illicit pictures?

Another supplier of illicit wants is the performer of the illegal operation, he or she who, in return for a substantial sum of money, guarantees to be able to rescue a maiden from the critical comments of a censorious public opinion and from the inconveniences of a situation which she may be most unwilling to face. That a demand exists for the services of such practitioners few will be disposed to deny. And where there is a demand there is always a supply; nor can it be said that the imprisonment of the surgeons who perform an unsuccessful operation has any discouraging effect upon those desirous of emulating their labours or of seeking

their advice. Faced with apparent disaster, human nature is always prepared to take great risks, and the risk of appearing at the Old Bailey is one of them, a risk taken over and over again, to the confusion of the moralist, but to the immense advantage of the practitioner.

Our American cousins have shown us very plainly what an immense advantage it may be to the crook to live in a land where alcohol is prohibited. In no other country, one believes, can beer be brewed at 12s. a barrel and sold by the producers at £11 a barrel. As ever, the crook takes off his hat to the moralist.

Thus it is to be imagined, if ever the League of Nations is enabled to function as an international council for the promotion of public morality, and thereby to close such safety-valves as at present exist, owing to the different national legal codes in force, permitting in some countries what is forbidden in others, that the sole profiteers will be the international crooks who at an exorbitant price come to the rescue of individual liberty.

## THE ART OF PURE CONFIDENCE

WE turn now to a series of examples of what may be styled the art of pure confidence: cases, that is to say, where the artists rely on little else for their success but their own powers of personality and their ability to tell their several tales in a manner which inspires confidence in the hearts of their hearers.

That human beings of all sorts and kinds are amply endowed both with the power to convince and the power to be convinced none will doubt, we think, who will have the patience to read this chapter from start to finish, and it is our hope that what is here stated will be of practical service to every neophyte in the profession, either as an encouragement or as a warning; for most of the artists whose exploits are recounted are conspicuous for their pertinacity, though, as will be recognized, against great odds. Their careers are continually interrupted in a very monotonous manner, but their periods of intervening activity are full of vitality. Thus we present them as types of enterprise in a department of the profession at all times crowded with beginners.

Amongst such beginners none would seem to be worthier of mention first than a highly talented,

well-groomed, persuasive young man who in the early twenties succeeded in assuring a middle-aged lady of affluence that he was the 'Count of Boulogne,' and that he possessed a castle in Cornwall. The lady had doubtless heard of castles in Spain, and possibly of castles in the air, but this castle was in Cornwall.

By this assurance on his part he produced more sensational, and, it is to be thought, far more practical results than did Lohengrin, that other knight who, arriving clad in shining armour in a boat drawn by an enchanted swan, talked in a somewhat similar way to the impressionable Elsa of Brabant about a castle at Monsalvat. We are not precisely informed what Elsa parted with, but we have it on record that in the case of the 'Count of Boulogne' four middle-aged ladies parted between them with the sum of £30,000.

It came about thus. This fairy prince was born of humble parents in a little fishing village in Cornwall. And it may be that it was these surroundings which first encouraged him to try his skill in the difficult art of fishing for large hauls in troubled waters. We cannot say, for, as in the case of so many enchanting heroes, his early youth lies buried in oblivion. He first appears definitely in history, by which one means the authentic history edited by Scotland Yard, as a lad of fourteen on the verge of leaving school. His first occupation was that of an assistant gardener, but his first step of promise was to take rooms with a single lady and

presently to depart with £26 worth of her jewellery. For this little demonstration of his powers he was very rightly bound over for three years by some sympathetic magistrates. He then continued his career as an hotel waiter.

Not long after this he had the misfortune (or was it good luck?) to meet with a serious motor accident, destined to cripple him for life and necessitating his immediate removal to a local hospital. Whilst recumbent here he was visited assiduously by a charitable lady, who was so charmed by his personality that on his being sufficiently recovered to be removed, she invited him to regard her house as his home. This he was most pleased to do. He stayed a year, and by the time he left he had succeeded in obtaining from her the modest sum of £10,000. Nor was this all, for he obtained also from a jeweller £1,200 worth of jewellery, and from another lady £1,500. History does not state how he managed to obtain these sums of money, but one is left to surmise that he must have been an extraordinarily charming young man.

On the proceeds of this wholly appropriate tribute to his genius he purchased a motor business, and, when not occupied in the transaction of his affairs, he toured the country in a car of his own with a chauffeur and valet in attendance.

Some little time later, he put up at a very well-known hotel in Kensington, and it was here that he encountered the lady who was only too ready to accept his assurance that he was indeed the 'Count

of Boulogne' and that he had a castle in Cornwall. That he should also be at the moment in need of a little ready money may not have unduly surprised her. Counts are often impecunious. At any rate, she granted his request for a loan, but not without asking for a security. And to this most sensible request he answered with that promptness which was an essential part of his charm that he had a house in Grosvenor Square, but that it was temporarily let to the Japanese Embassy. On this security she advanced him altogether £19,500, in return for which he took her for several drives in his car and made himself generally charming and agreeable.

The result of this was that in time there was a High Court Action, the 'Count' being ordered to pay £3,000 or go to prison. Being unable to raise the money, and reluctant to retire as yet to Brixton, he set himself to charm another lady in the interval, from whom he obtained four blank cheques, giving her a single one for £8,000 in exchange, drawn on his own account; his excuse for this rather strange arrangement being that he had only one cheque left in his book at the moment of the transaction. Unfortunately it would appear that he had not got £8,000 in his bank, and in any case, owing to an injunction, he could not have drawn upon it for even one pound. Things now became too complicated even for his pronounced genius. He found himself obliged to put in an appearance at the Old Bailey and to retire to Wormwood Scrubs



for 22 months in the second division by way of recuperation.

As may be imagined, he regained perfect health, and on his release he succeeded once more in charming another middle-aged lady who believed him to be a young gentleman of great expectations and consented to become his housekeeper, incidentally paying many of his current expenses. In order the better to establish his reputation he very skilfully compiled a bogus pass-book of the Westminster Bank, in which he credited himself with payments from his solicitors amounting in all to some £95,000. He did this financial editing so well that it was only by careful examination of their books that the Bank could distinguish between the actual and the fraudulent entries. In the meantime he managed to obtain credit at an hotel for himself, his housekeeper-designate, whom he described as his aunt—a doubtful compliment—and a friend, by writing the lady a cheque for £30, which she endorsed, and which he then presented to the hotel manager. But once again affairs became too complicated, and arriving this time at Marylebone Police Court he was sentenced to nine months' hard labour. On this occasion he had the honour to be described by the prosecuting counsel as 'a specialist in the victimization of middle-aged spinsters,' and as 'a man who could charm a pear off a cherry-tree.' One is always grateful for 'praise from Sir Hubert Stanley,' and no doubt this talented young artist must have felt that fate had so far been wondrously

kind to him. Beyond the standards now of the very exclusive Wormwood Scrubs, he rested this time within the ever-open doors of catholicly minded Wandsworth.

So far his artistic career stops short at this point, but we do not despair. He who despite the crippling effects of a motor accident can turn all his luck into good luck belongs by right to the nobility of any spiritual order, if not as a saint, then as a criminal.

Meanwhile, we do not for a moment believe that the title of 'Count of Boulogne' is extinct. At the most it may be dormant. Artistically speaking, we cannot but think that this young nobleman will be the first to do homage to the tradition of his order and exemplify its motto, *Noblesse oblige*.

We may next mention an accomplished woman who, after her sentence at Cardiff Quarter Sessions, was introduced to the general public the following Sunday by the *News of the World* in an introductory foreword to a leading article, in a manner so comprehensive and instant in its appeal to the lover of romance, that one repeats it here for the benefit of the reader.

'Still retaining a great deal of the charm and attractiveness which proved so alluring to those who fell victims to her spell, one of the most notorious adventuresses known to Scotland Yard has once more been consigned to penal servitude.

'The ravages that long years in prison have wreaked upon her have not filched away all her

beauty; neither have they sapped any cunning from her criminal brain.

'In her wake lies a trail of broken and disillusioned men, who succumbed to her fascinations and paid a heavy price for her treacherous, heartless smiles.

'Hers is the old, old story of extravagance and vicious habits leading to evil courses. After accomplishing the ruin of her young husband, she galloped heedlessly along the broad and easy path which leads inevitably to gaol.

'Sparkling jewels were a lure she could never resist, and in her case the alliance of beauty and brains, though it enabled her to exploit her criminal tendencies with the greatest ease, ultimately brought about her downfall.'<sup>1</sup>

Without doubt, if one desires to recapture the unadulterated spirit of the old English melodrama, one has only to bathe one's soul afresh in the regenerative waters of this miraculous Sunday newspaper, or to listen to Sir Ernest Wild at the Old Bailey.

In plain words the career of this distinguished adventuress was as follows:

She was the daughter of parents who, with popular consent, were described as being respectable, which comes to mean, of course, in England, that they were reliable, conventional folk who managed at all times to keep their behaviour within

<sup>1</sup> *News of the World*, October 9, 1927.

the limits of the ordinary. There was nothing at all odd about them; nor did anyone censure them for bringing into being a daughter whose beauty won not merely the admiration of many young men, but also recognition at those competitions of beauty which help to bring into prominence for a while and to advertise charms which might, save for them, languish in the shade.

At any rate, by such means this young woman came gradually to realize that she was not only very beautiful but that beauty is power. But hardly had she made this important discovery before she surrendered her charms at the age of twenty-three to an architect, becoming his lawful wife. This in her case was a mistake, because their combined income was only £300 a year, and it soon dawned upon her mind that for a woman like herself to be respectable on that income was ridiculous. She needed thousands where there were but hundreds. So, facing this situation in the spirit of the true artist of these pages, she made it her business to fascinate wealthy persons and to win the confidence of their wives, the latter being the more difficult task. That her methods of fascination were practical would seem to be proved by the fact that her husband divorced her at the commencement of her campaign. This, whilst giving her a greater freedom, inclined her to offer her services as a lady governess in houses which struck her as being suitable for strategic ends. Once firmly established in the household of her choice, she

found she could operate artistically and profitably in one or all of three ways. She could be of help to burglars who might wish an inventory of the household goods, coupled with assistance from inside as to the most suitable hour for its invasion; she could herself decamp with her mistress's jewels; or, if it seemed worth while, she could decamp with the master of the house as well, so great at the time were her powers of personality.

Like most beautiful women, she loved jewels, and she realized that the easiest way to obtain these assets was by inspiring such confidence in the heart of jewellers that they would permit her to receive them on approval. In some instances she achieved this stratagem straight away: in others she worked up to it more gradually by purchasing and paying for several inexpensive jewels and then, when the salesman's confidence had at length been won, she brought off her coup with an expensive article supplied to her on approval.

Very naturally there came a day when, like other débutantes of similar mind, she was presented at Court for the first time, and was convicted on three separate charges of obtaining articles of value by false pretences. But her youthful charms triumphed, and she was dealt with very leniently. Her next appearance in public was before Sir Robert Wallace, until recently the Chairman of the London Sessions. On this occasion she was charged with jewel thefts, and on being

convicted was placed on probation, but with the condition that she resided for a period in a L.C.C. mental home. From this insult to her talents she contrived successfully to escape, nor was she heard of again until she turned up one day at the Exeter Quarter Sessions. It was very obviously proved on this occasion that she had not been wasting her time, for she had to her credit two pearl necklaces valued at £2,000, which she had obtained on approval, and had most sensibly disposed of the selfsame day for £1,100. This time the Bench was more ready to acknowledge her claims to recognition, but found itself totally unable to shut up so beautiful a woman for more than sixteen months, subject to the usual facilities for release at an earlier date. Perhaps she was not altogether sorry to have a little rest and an opportunity to envisage her future tactics. At any rate, on her release she managed to have a fairly long run for her money, with only occasional interruptions of a brief duration, until at Bournemouth she received three years' penal servitude from the Recorder of that Borough for obtaining a pearl and diamond brooch by paying for it with a worthless cheque. She may have felt it a slur on the escutcheon of her glory that she had to have recourse to a cheque at all, but the fact that it was accepted by the jeweller was in its way a consolation to an artist.

On emerging again from prison she was very successful indeed. She first gave several demonstrations of her skill to the jewellers of London, and

then set forth on a provincial tour, visiting, amongst other places, Ilfracombe, Barnstaple, Cheltenham, Swansea, and Cardiff. At Cardiff, however, she came to grief, and in consequence retired from the public gaze for five years.

On her remarking to the Recorder pitifully, "My Lord, I am so sick of this life," that eminent member of the Bar replied briefly, but effectively, "So are we."

At the time of writing one imagines that this temporarily extinct volcano is about due to become active once more; but unlike the newspapers we respectfully decline to give away the names under which great artists have been convicted, though the names they assumed for the purposes of their triumphs we feel may be honourably mentioned as a tribute to their art.

We may next mention a practitioner of the age of thirty-eight, who is chiefly notable for his powers of imagination and for the strength of his heartlessness.

This man, although actually only a mate on a vessel, decided that it sounded much more picturesque to describe himself as a sea captain and a master-mariner. In this latter capacity he came as a lodger one day to a good and respectable woman who had a house near Regent's Park. Very likely it gave her a romantic pleasure to feel that she had a sea-captain on the premises, for landsmen love the ocean and sailors are always popular the world over. Evidently he told her many breezy tales, but

all of these paled into insignificance before the story he told her one morning as to how he had recently purchased a boat of his own for the sum of £2,500. She received the news with interest and animation, nor does it seem that she was in the least surprised when, some days after he had broached the news, he requested a loan of £14 to pay the crew. She not only granted the request forthwith, but she allowed him to discover in a friendly way that she had more money than he had imagined to be the case, and that she contemplated buying a house. Very naturally it at once occurred to him that it would be better if, instead of buying house property, she gave the money to him; but lest such a proposition might seem too abrupt, he told her another sea-story to the effect that he and a friend of his had decided to buy another boat and that he strongly advised her to come into the scheme as a partner. The idea of having an interest in a boat appealed to her enormously, two men and a woman seeming to her an improvement upon the adage, 'three men in a boat.' So she handed the captain £350. Of this he told her he should put £100 into a motor transport business connected with their shipping firm. She agreed; nor did she raise any objections when a little later he asked her casually for £30 for some tarpaulins.

Not long after this, the master-mariner encountered some very bad weather with the police, with the result that both boats, the entire shipping



business, and all the tarpaulins sank to the bottom, while he himself went into dry dock at Marylebone.

It was then, from the lips of the Recording Angel of the Court, that the good and respectable, and now alas poor but respectable, woman heard for the first time what a wonderful man her captain was, and what a Jack-of-all-trades he had been.

In 1915 he had been a stealer of furniture. In 1919 he had won the Victoria Cross without any valid authority; possibly he thought that many distinguished persons wear medals without any very valid claim—we do not know. A little later he tried his hand at the romantic game of bigamy in the Channel Islands. In 1926 he retired for some months as a result of ventures in the larceny trade, and on his release he disappeared for another three months for a kind of conjuring trick in which the man who lends the articles does not get them back. On another occasion he commenced to run a theatrical company, but decided eventually to run away from it instead, not without profit, for he never did anything silly. Truly a protean artist.

As a result of the boat accident he was anchored in Wandsworth Harbour for twelve calendar months.

Next may be mentioned the methods of a young woman of much experience who, after various vicissitudes and several conflicts with the Law, emerged one day from the gates of friendly Holloway to take up work as a maidservant at a country vicarage.

The family consisted simply of the Vicar and his wife, the latter being aware of the fact that their new domestic had recently resided at 'the Castle.'

Soon after her arrival, and feeling most likely a little homesick, as do all crooks who find themselves for long separated from their own spiritual kith and kin, she began to size up the possibilities of her new situation; nor was it long before she decided upon a course of action.

Calling one afternoon at the premises of a local costumier, and introducing herself as the Vicar's daughter, she asked to be shown two dresses, 'not too dear and suitable for a maid.' After inspecting these, she said she would like to take them back to the Vicarage on approval before finally deciding on their purchase. And this she was permitted to do by the attendant, who evidently thought that the word of a daughter of the Church was in itself a security. Thus she returned to the Vicarage with the dresses, and also a pair of shoes which she had obtained with equal ease from another tradesman.

Before very long the first tradesman wrote to the Vicarage to inquire what the lady intended to do with regard to the dresses, and received in reply a letter from the Vicar's wife apologizing for the delay in payment for the dress chosen by her daughter, and also for the fact that the other dress had not been returned to the shop. She promised to send both the rejected dress and the money for

the one chosen at the earliest opportunity. But this letter was followed almost immediately by another requesting him to send a black silk dress on approval as well.

Thinking evidently that enough is as good as a feast, the tradesman decided to call at the Vicarage in person. And on doing so, the door was opened by the maid, who, on hearing his request that he might see the lady of the house, told him that she was afraid he could not do so that day as her mistress was unwell, while the Vicar, she hastened to add, was away.

Asked to give a message to her mistress concerning the dresses, she said she would do so, and on returning in a few moments she told the tradesman that her mistress said the Vicar would send him a cheque in payment of the account immediately on his return; and with this assurance the shopkeeper departed.

As a matter of fact, the Vicar and his wife were at lunch at the time, and seeing the tradesman depart they inquired who he was, only to be informed that he was a friend of their maid.

Very naturally, after this the young woman herself totally disappeared, leaving the costumier, the Vicar, and his wife to make such mutual discoveries as might be necessary.

So far so good; and all might have ended harmoniously from the artist's own point of view had not she made, like so many of her brothers and sisters, one fatal mistake. In the confusion of

packing her suit-cases, she left a label behind, and on that label was neatly written, 'Mrs. Nancette de Witt, passenger to Paddington.'

Now, whatever may be the opinion of the more youthful crooks, the members of the C.I.D. are no fools, and they possess a perfect flair for detecting wandering works of art in the shortest time imaginable. Thus 'Nancette' was speedily rescued from oblivion in the county of Surrey, where it was discovered she had taken a situation in London on the strength of an excellent testimonial from a lady who described herself as the aforesaid Vicar's mother-in-law, a letter presumably written in reply to an inquiry before 'Nancette' left the Vicarage.

By way of curiosity at this point, the police took her finger-prints, and these supplied them with information about her which greatly redounded to her artistic credit, showing her very plainly to be an accomplished worker within the scope of more than one section of the Larceny Acts.

By the magistrates before whom she was summarily convicted, she was described as 'a thoroughly bad and dangerous woman,' but presumably owing to their own appreciation of crime as an art, they declined to protect society against her for more than four months.

On hearing her sentence, this fashionably dressed young lady smiled, as well she might. Had she been a Roman matron she might even have remarked "O sancta simplicitas." As it was, she doubtless

took comfort from the thought that, with allowances made for remission, she would be at liberty to resume her career with freedom from past commitments in about thirteen weeks' time. And during this period, at no expense to herself, she would have leisure in which to consider her mistakes with a view to their subsequent amendment. She would certainly be the first to acknowledge that she deserved four months' loss of liberty: not for obtaining dresses and shoes by false pretences, but for leaving behind her that incriminating luggage label and for taking a situation in the same name as that by which she intended to travel. She had, moreover, been very careless indeed in her choice of nomenclature. She had indulged in repetitions, and had forgotten the remark of Emerson, to wit, that 'imitation is suicide.' True, she had not in the past lacked the power to create names for herself. Among others she had annexed those of Barnett, Gregory, Towell, Pearl, and Van-Carr, and had ended in the dock on this occasion magnificently with the Christian names of Myra Debonnaire Nancette. She was full of promise, but she had taken needless risks and—there was that luggage label. Thus she deserved four months, and one hopes she learnt her lesson. Otherwise she was a credit to her profession alike for her perseverance as for her creative ideas.

Of her relations with the Vicar's wife she had little to complain, save that she stated that this lady objected to her habit of occasionally taking

exercise on a motor-cycle, as also of friendly conversations she had with the gardener. She also alleged that one morning the Vicar's wife remarked, "What would the parish people say if I told them you had been in prison?" From which one gathers that perhaps life at the Vicarage was not quite the right milieu for one 'so young, so gay, so debonair' as herself.

"So I left," she said. But unfortunately that wretched label remained, blabbing to all and every, 'Mrs. Nancette de Witt, passenger to Paddington.'

Returning now to the opposite sex. About a year before the outbreak of the war, a boy, not yet thirteen years old, was sent to a reformatory school, having been detected stealing some money. His early upbringing had been of a kind to suggest to his mind that he belonged to no one in particular. And this may possibly have encouraged him to rely upon himself to a degree unusual to the youth of a generation which is educated to retard for so long as possible the dawn of personal responsibility. His father was reputed to have been an actor, so that it may be he inherited the histrionic outlook of 'the profession' and its ability to play in many parts.

At the reformatory school he won considerable success. He was top of his form. And on his release he managed to achieve still greater results. He was publicly acclaimed by the magistrates on ten separate occasions. As a result he was deemed

worthy to be a pupil at the finishing school of Borstal.

From this institution he escaped, but not before he had succeeded in conferring upon himself an excellent bearing and a happy manner of expressing himself. His opinion of Borstal was summed up by his describing it as 'a sink of iniquity where the boys boast of and compare their various crimes.' This is not, however, the general opinion concerning this little colony of public schools, reserved exclusively for those who have given some indication of criminal talent. That the boys may boast of and compare their crimes is likely enough, there being little else to boast about; but it does not follow from this that Borstal is a sink of iniquity. Rather would one describe it as a finishing school for young hopefuls, which can claim many successes in after life, of which this young man was without doubt one.

He had made it his business to acquire a very fair practical understanding and a still better theoretical knowledge of the science of aviation. And having done so, he at once assumed the rôle of a Squadron Leader of the Royal Air Force; though at times, by way of change, he described himself as 'Lord Dudley S.'—or even more picturesquely as 'the nephew of Lady S.'

It was in his rôle of the Squadron Leader that he undertook to arrange a passenger flight to Switzerland for a lady who was desirous of reaching the mountains in this manner. But actually, all

that he seems to have done towards the organization of this trip, was to get hold of her cheque-book. Armed with this, he went boldly to an aviation company's office in the West End, where he negotiated for the purchase of an aeroplane priced at £785. And in this he made a trial trip over London, telling the pilot that he was a millionaire, and that it really made very little difference to him whether he paid £700 or 7d. for the machine. This so much impressed the pilot that he lent him £2 on the spot when he discovered, as is so often the case, that persons possessed of vast wealth nearly always forget to bring out any pocket money; probably because a hundred pounds being like a penny, it means carrying twenty pounds or nothing at all.

But, like so many of those who fly high, he eventually crashed, and had the misfortune to come down in the dock of the London Sessions, where even Sir Robert Wallace felt it would be derogatory to his talents to give him less than three years' penal servitude.

On hearing this sentence, he bowed, saying, "Thank you, my Lord," in accordance with the best traditions of the profession.

The moral of this illustration is, of course, perfectly clear. One must turn all one's luck into good luck. And if one be sent by a paternal State to a reformatory school or Borstal Institution, one must learn everything of value these academies have to bestow. And if one is to judge by the reports of old pupils, there is much indeed to be



learnt and assimilated which may be of great practical service in later life. Next to being born and bred in crime, it would seem nothing could be logically more conducive to desirable proficiency in this art than to be sent for a reasonable period of time to a school exclusively reserved for those who have shown some early aptitude as artists.

Alive at all times to the remunerative value of modern inventions, the practitioner in crime has for long made the best possible use of the telephone, and nowhere more so than in that realm of confidence in which we are at the moment moving.

Thus a painstaking worker, a little under the age of forty, found it an excellent plan to ring up a West End club, and, after saying he was a well-known member of it and giving his name, he would then go on to inform the clerk of the club that he was sending along a man who had just been offered a job, and that he would be obliged if the clerk would hand him a sum of money and debit it to his account.

In this manner he rang up the Cavalry Club, saying he was Colonel G., and that he was sending a man who was on his way to take up work at the Army and Navy Stores, and that he would be obliged if the clerk would hand him £4. He then went himself to the club and obtained the money; incidentally exemplifying how easy it may be to succeed in life if one's voice be like that of a colonel in the British Army.

He was equally successful at the United Services

Club, indeed more so, for there he obtained £5, and by the time he figured in the police court at Great Marlborough Street he had quite a small collection of cases to be taken into general consideration. Among these was an attempt he made to obtain money from a milkman, simply by confronting him and saying that he was Brigadier-General B. But the milkman was an undisciplined fellow, and instead of at once dropping all his milk-bottles and standing to attention, he simply refused the loan, an act of insubordination which made this artist realize very likely that it was better to have recourse to the telephone in the pursuit of his ends.

He met his Waterloo at the Carlton Club, where he was outmanœuvred by its secretary, himself a General also. As a result he returned to the St. Helena of Wandsworth for twelve months. His wife said he was 'a lazy, good-for-nothing scoundrel.' But the facts showed he was good for at least £9, and had taken great pains to collect it.

Praise where praise is due.

Of even greater interest were the methods of a younger man who, after dismissing himself from the service of a gentleman to whom he had been chauffeur, hit upon the happy idea of ordering goods in his former master's name from those West End shops where he had reason to know this gentleman had an account open. By such means, and in some cases by the aid of the telephone, he prevailed upon Messrs. Harrod to supply him with

boots and shoes, value £2 17s. 6d., and obtained more boots and shoes, value £6 5s., from Messrs. Lilley and Skinner.

Becoming more ambitious, he next tried his hand at the establishment of Messrs. D. H. Evans & Co., of Oxford Street, where in the name of his former employer he ordered five pairs of ladies' shoes and three pairs of silk stockings, total value £9 19s. 3d. These latter he directed to be sent to a lady of his own name at an address in Westbourne Park, and to be delivered about a certain hour. They were sent by motor van, and were received by himself in person, as the brother of the lady in question. All would have been well had not Messrs. Evans most unfortunately delivered a detective-sergeant by the same van who, overhearing the conversation between the gentleman and the driver, decided (as it might be phrased in court) 'to take a certain course.' At any rate, as is so often the case in this department of West End art, the paths of glory have a habit of leading straight to Great Marlborough Street, and that was precisely what happened on this occasion. Arrived there, the artist had his career carefully examined and all claims to credit duly assessed. It then transpired that he had been very successful in obtaining whisky from West End clubs in the name of former employers, and that he had not disdained to gather £5 from a fellow-chauffeur, simply by telling him a pathetic story of unemployment and domestic woes.

So he too was sent to the National Gallery on Wandsworth Common, to be hung on the line for eight months in that perpetual exhibition of contemporary works of art.

Hotels and boarding-houses are without doubt perennially hospitable to those who, having no visible means of subsistence, are anxious to pretend they have, and thereby escape the humiliation of testing the Vagrancy Act by sleeping out. It is far better to sleep in, and it is far more comfortable to put up at a good hotel than at any of the hostels provided by the benefactors of the soul of man.

Thus two sisters, one of them a widow who had since her husband's death run through several thousand pounds, and the other a woman separated from her husband, in company with their mother and two children, contrived to subsist for twelve months by the simple method of assuring a succession of hotel and boarding-house managers that they were expecting a cheque from their solicitor, and the arrival of a friend from South Africa with a hundred pounds. As neither of these expectations was fulfilled, and after entering and leaving several hotels and boarding-houses, they were eventually sent to Holloway for six months, their mother being discharged on the ground that she had acted under their influence. In each case there was a previous conviction, which plainly showed them to be experienced demonstrators of this particular branch of domestic service.

One assumes that they left their luggage behind

them in each case, after the manner of many residents on the Continent, some of whom take pains to have their trunks filled with sand in order to inspire the hotel luggage porters with a sense of the weight of their contents. In such a way it would seem to be possible to stay at many hotels for a period of a week, provided one possesses an office somewhere in which one can acquire new luggage and load it in advance preparatory to each new venture, or give some likely explanation of its absence on arrival.

To prolong a visit at any one place, after the first bill has been presented, is to invite observation upon the part of the management. It is better therefore to leave when the bill becomes due, and to remember carefully never to repeat the same name, and when possible to avoid the wearing of any very distinctive dress.

Some people again make a practice of dining out at good restaurants without the troublesome necessity of paying the bill.

Thus a young man arrived one evening at Appenrodts' in Piccadilly, and after remarking languidly, "I have had a busy day and I want a good meal," ordered six oysters, a sole, a steak and vegetables, a cocktail, and a bottle of champagne. His method of inspiring confidence took the curious form of going twice during the meal to the lavatory, and making a third visit when the bill was produced.

He evidently assumed that the management would take it for granted that, as he had reappeared

twice, he would reappear a third time. On the contrary, scientific in mind, they took nothing for granted, and had him followed and brought back under arrest.

His bill amounted to 35s. 11d., and all that he said in reply, when he was asked to pay it, was "Go to the County Court and sue me." Instead they went to Great Marlborough Street, and Mr. Mead settled the account by sentencing the young man to six weeks' hard labour.

Getting out of restaurants without paying one's bill is a far more difficult task than getting out of hotels if one's bill be a large one; yet people achieve it successfully, as the file of unpaid bills in a restaurant manager's office will testify. Nor does it pay a restaurant to prosecute for small sums.

But it is doubtful whether any self-respecting artist will permit himself to stoop to these means, unless it be for a wager, or unless he has reached a point in his career when he thinks that an immediate meal in his stomach is worth the risk of several more in a cell, and that he has the power to bluff the situation through. That it can be done at least once is obvious to anyone who reflects what he would do if, at the end of a meal, he made the genuine discovery that he had come out without any money, and had no jewellery of value upon him to offer as a security against his return. He would give his card, or at least his name and address, and he would be suffered to depart in peace, unless he had ordered, as had the diner-out

in the case already mentioned, a champagne supper and had failed, until the very end, to discover his inability to pay. And even then he might be permitted to leave did he behave in a conventional manner.

The defence of the young champagne and oyster man was that he had been drinking all day, was drunk when he reached the restaurant, and had no recollection of having been there at all until the following day. The magistrate thought, however, that he had arrived sober, and had left emphatically under the influence of the champagne, in which case he must have known that he had no money in his pocket, whilst his behaviour invited criticism.

But at the best it was a sorry piece of work, and to say more about it would be to say more than such incidents deserve.

The self-respecting crook pays all his small bills like any other citizen, and likewise his railway fares, unless perchance he be the member of a racing gang and an expert in the art of 'Jimming.'

'Jem Maceing' or 'Jimming' is the name traditionally accorded by the crook artists of the turf to the (in their case) most needful habit of travelling gratis on the railways. It is an intricate game, and it depends for its success very largely upon knowing by experience the precise point on any journey to and from London where the tickets are collected or inspected, and the best means of outwitting the 'snapper.'

The methods develop upwards from the crude

attempt to escape notice by rolling oneself under the seat of an otherwise empty first-class compartment, to the various elaborate dodges whereby the ticket collector may be outwitted mentally.

Two methods worthy of mention in these pages are the following. One may note and memorize the number of a fellow-traveller's ticket, and then take care to avoid the ticket collector until some little time after he has collected this ticket, as, for example, by walking further down the corridor. Then, when asked for one's ticket in due course, one remarks convincingly, "Why, you have already taken it, and what is more, I can prove it, for it is my habit to write down the number of my ticket. Look among those you have in your hand, and you will see you have Number ——." The chances of any ticket collector disputing this defence are remote.

The other method is to lose one's balance in the corridor, and by barging into the collector, cause him to drop some tickets on the floor, and then to help him pick them up, handing in the last one recovered as one's own. One may even keep one under these circumstances, and pass it to a friend similarly in need.

There is also more than one way of getting through the barrier at stations where the tickets are taken at one's destination. Perhaps in a crowded terminus the simplest method, if one has no luggage, is to get a friend to meet one, and to bring on to the platform with him *two* platform tickets.



But, as we have already intimated, such endeavours to evade the vigilance of the railway companies seem to us unworthy of artists, unless the use of the railways for long distances be a part of their daily programme.<sup>1</sup>

In our opinion, regarding crime as an art or as an illicit profession, it seems to us that the practitioner should be strictly conventional in his behaviour upon all points save the one by which he hopes to earn his living in a manner more agreeable to his tastes than to those of the majority of his fellow-citizens. He should, that is to say, be in every sense of the word a specialist. And the greater the artist, the less likely is he to lay himself open to any charge other than that of doing a particular form of illegality over and over again, with varying but on the whole profitable results.

In the world of criminal enterprise, no undertaking makes a greater appeal to some of its workers than do the so-called 'long firm deals.'

A group of confederates open a ring of businesses in different localities. They all send orders to manufacturers. Each gives the others as business references, and they all pay the wholesale firms scrupulously for a given period. Then, when confidence has been established, larger and larger orders are given and credit is allowed. Finally the whole stock in hand is sold off at bargain prices before payment has been made for it. All the

<sup>1</sup> For the basis of these examples and for further recipes, see Charles Gordon, *Crooks of the Underworld* (Geoffrey Bles).

businesses close down, and the confederates abscond with the collective profits, usually sufficient in amount to justify the deal from the standpoint of its operators.

The methods employed, however, vary, and it is possible for a man to work a long firm fraud alone.

Thus a man of considerable previous experience in the business world, who had directed several bankrupt firms, one with a liability of £8,000, and who in company with two other men had served eighteen months for conspiracy to defraud, contrived on his release to obtain the sum of £2,835 worth of credit by trading in a large industrial town under the same name as a well-known firm already for long established there. The manufacturers took some time before they discovered that there existed no actual connection between this man's business and the firm of sustained repute. And by that time he had effected his purpose. That he was arrested and sentenced to three years' penal servitude made very little difference to his creditors, nor is it to be thought that it in any way damped the ardour of his own optimism. The profits had been very reasonable.

That the long firm deals work as well as they do, is due to the fact that the giving of credit is essential in the transaction of business, and that there exists no adequate protection against the wiles of the fraudulent artist.

Cousin once removed to the long-firm dealer is the undischarged bankrupt who obtains credit over

and above the sum of £10 without disclosing his insolvent state. He should not, however, be deemed a *bona fide* crook unless he combines with his efforts to obtain money other pleasantries than merely the request for credit.

Thus a University tutor was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment in the second division for obtaining credit from local tradesmen without informing them of his financial status, he being an undischarged bankrupt. But he also apparently lent colour to his scheme by claiming to be a Doctor of Science and an M.A. of Cambridge, to neither of which degrees had he ever attained. Hence he had the makings of an artist.

Last, but not least among the methods whereby trust is inspired, may be mentioned that which is often called '*the confidence trick*,' a single example of which will be sufficient for the purpose of these pages, it being borne in mind that it is a theme capable of being played with many variations. Its subjects are usually men of means on a visit to London or any other great city, who are enticed into conversation by some engaging stranger who has taken the trouble to make previous inquiries into their mentalities and their financial status.

Thus quite recently, a gentleman on a visit to London from Vienna encountered a stranger on the borders of the Serpentine in Hyde Park. They got into conversation, and within a day or so, met again apparently by accident near the Cenotaph.

On this occasion the stranger told the gentleman

that like himself he was visiting London, that he was a native of New Zealand, and that he owned a farm there worth £2,000 a year. Just about this time the stranger introduced him to another man of whose prestige in the City he spoke in glowing terms, nor did the newly introduced man dispute his claim to this encomium. On the contrary he revealed the fact that he had just brought off a deal on the Stock Exchange which would be worth £138,000, the only hindrance being the necessity of first depositing £6,000.

At this, the first stranger offered to put up £4,000, if the gentleman would add the other £2,000, in return for which loans they would, of course, expect a highly advantageous rate of interest.

So greatly impressed was the gentleman with the honesty of his two friends, that he actually returned to Vienna to negotiate the loan, and so sure were the two confederates of netting the £2,000 that they met him on his return at Victoria Station, where they suggested that they should all three put up at the same hotel pending the completion of their business.

But by this time the Viennese had become very suspicious, and as a precaution asked the opinion of Scotland Yard. The opinion given was quite definite and to the point, and the two confederates were formally charged with attempted larceny by a trick, and on conviction before the magistrate were sentenced to three months each in the second division.

For success in this trick it is more than usually necessary to strike while the iron is hot. To permit the victim to escape is to encourage him to think in an atmosphere free from the influence of his advisers. Evidently the journey to and from Vienna, even if he travelled by the *train de luxe*, jolted him back into that condition of common sense so prejudicial to crooked enterprise.

The methods employed in the performance of this confidence trick are, as we have said, many, but they all hinge for their success upon the ability to trade upon that sense of honour in vogue amongst gentlemen. Many persons find it difficult to believe that if one man asks another to take care of his gold watch, and duly receives it back, the same man, if entrusted with the gold watch of the other in return, will not feel under a similar obligation to produce it when required, but will promptly disappear.

Such little mutual tests of confidence are constantly in progress between crooks and their customers. Both are equally surprised at the behaviour of the other. The crook cannot fathom the folly of his dupe. The dupe cannot grasp the mentality of the crook.

## THE ART OF THE FORGER AND THE COINER

IN the world of criminal art no two figures have greater claim to consideration than the forger of documents, notes, and signatures, and the maker of counterfeit coins.

Anyone who possesses the requisite knowledge and ability can become a forger should he so desire, in so far as the actual production of facsimile copies is concerned; but it calls for far greater ancillary gifts than these to embark upon the exceedingly dangerous profession of forgery, which necessarily includes within its scope the uttering of the forged documents when made, and the obtaining of cheque forms, cancelled cheques, and much needful information.

In the popular mind this art would seem to be inseparably linked with the legendary fame of the late lamented James Townsend Seward, a barrister-at-law who came to be better known as "Jim the Penman."

At the age of fifty-eight this talented artist made his one and only appearance at the Old Bailey in the year 1857, from where he had the misfortune to be transported for life to the Colonies, this form of punishment being in vogue at the time for an

offence previously dealt with by the aid of the hangman, as proved in person by the luckless engraver William Ryland, as also by the popular preacher Dr. Dodd.

The chief interest attaching to James Saward nowadays centres in the methods which he employed in the pursuit of his aims. Like every crook of prestige and standing, he made himself difficult of access to all save those conspirators in whom he felt he could place personal reliance as intermediaries between himself and the objects of his attack; and it is conceivable that he made provision for the watching of the intermediaries as well.

All that the members of the underworld were permitted to know was that there existed a purchaser of any blank cheque forms and particularly any cancelled cheques with their drawer's signature, which might fall into the hands of burglars in the course of their evening turn-overs of household goods, and that this purchaser might be approached through a few trusty henchmen more easy of access than the great man himself.

Once possessed of the requisite cheques and cheque forms in this manner, Mr. Saward would make patient inquiries into the likely financial status of the owner of the bank account in question, so that there might be no careless mistakes in drawing cheques for amounts which might not be honoured.

This matter settled to his satisfaction, he would then with his best skill fill in a blank cheque form,

and sign it with a perfect replica of the signature of the bank's customer, all that now remained being its successful passing.

This all-important step he accomplished with the aid of two confederates and one unconscious confederate, in the following way.

One of the conspirators, disguised in features, repaired to a prearranged spot, say, a room where he was living under an assumed name during the process of these operations. Here he would interview a young man in search of a job who had been given an appointment, and on the pretext of testing his honesty, he would dispatch him to the bank with the cheque, telling him to get it cashed and return with the money. The young man would at once go forth on his errand but, unknown to himself, shadowed by the second conspirator, whom he had never seen, whose duty it would be to see that the youth returned with the money after the cheque had been accepted by the bank, or, if the cheque were questioned and the youth detained at the bank, at once himself to return and warn the others, so that they might disperse in time.

The charm of this arrangement consisted in the fact that the youth could not recognize the first conspirator again, having only seen him disguised, nor could the forgery be traced to its originator.

By such means, considerable success was obtained over a long period. As often as not, the banks accepted the cheques, in which case the youth was put off with some excuse or other, after being



rewarded for his loss of time. Needless to add, the name, the address, and the disguise of the intermediary-in-chief were changed after each operation.

But like most great artists who depend upon confederates, Mr. Saward fell into the hands of the police through a mistake of one of his underlings, a concise history of his undoing being related by Mr. George Dilnot in *Jim the Penman* in the 'Famous Trial Series,' to which the reader who desires further information concerning this fascinating personage, may be referred.

It does not follow, however, that the practitioner in forgery necessarily is himself a penman. He may employ one to do the requisite forgery, just as the assistance of a skilled chef may be required as part of a successful evening's entertainment.

The usual method in vogue among penmen in the obtaining of replica signatures is that of copying the *bona fide* signature backwards, until with practice the requisite replica is obtained. There is, of course, the alternative method whereby the desired result is attained by the use of two or three pens working in conjunction with each other, as can be seen in operation in any pawnbroker's establishment when the assistant is making out the triplicate tickets. In this case a dry nib traces the signature which the inked nib reproduces.

In filling in the cheque form, the penman does not, as a rule, attempt to copy more than the actual signature; the amount to be drawn being written in a disguised handwriting of his own.

Great ingenuity may be exercised by the forger in obtaining the requisite cheque forms, an example of which was afforded by an artist of repute in recent years, whose habit it was to send a messenger boy to a bank, bearing a letter written on the notepaper of one of the most select hotels, and signed (apparently) by a distinguished customer of the bank, requesting a blank cheque form to be sent back by the bearer of the letter. On one occasion he wrote in this manner from the Waldorf Hotel, signing the letter with the name of a prominent society lady, whom he had taken care to discover in advance was a customer of the local branch of the bank to which he wrote. The bank sent the cheque form requested, and within twenty-four hours it was presented to the cashier by the forger himself, who had made it out for £120 and signed it with a replica of the lady's signature.

The cashier, however, was suspicious, and before cashing it he went to compare the signature with that in the bank's specimen book,—a precaution which proved beyond the endurance of the expectant artist, who at once left the premises.

On other occasions he conformed more nearly to the approved tactics of the famous 'Jim.' He employed the services of a messenger boy. But in so doing he exposed the dangers that may ensue if the bank approached be aware in advance of the designs of the artist. The cheque was apparently cashed, and a parcel was handed to the messenger, who, suspecting nothing, took it back to the forger.

He on his part, confident also, received the parcel, giving the lad for his trouble the somewhat meagre tip of sevenpence.

The parcel, on being opened, turned out to be a dummy one, and whilst pondering on the matter, the artist was arrested by the police, at whose instructions the stratagem had been laid. Like many crooks, this forger suffered from the defect of over-confidence. He performed his operations too repeatedly in too limited an area. The bankers were all on the *qui vive* for a messenger boy bearing a letter written on hotel notepaper requesting a cheque form to be sent by return, and signed by a customer of prestige.

More indicative of the genius of Higher Crookdom were the methods of an artist who, secretly a criminal, appeared before the public as a medical practitioner.<sup>1</sup>

Among his patients was a young lady whose occupation in life was that of confidential secretary to a millionaire. This young lady, during the course of her treatment, chatted very freely with her doctor, believing herself to be in the presence of a representative of a profession famous for its respect for the confidences of the consulting-room. Thus she told her medical adviser, amongst other things, that the millionaire had a credit account at his bank amounting to between £30,000 and £40,000, and further that his cheque-book was kept in his office safe in company with a parcel of jewellery.

<sup>1</sup> The narrative which follows is based on the facts related by the late Mr. Francis Carlin in his *Reminiscences of an Ex-Detective*.

This information struck the doctor as being of peculiar interest, in view of the fact that the young lady carried the millionaire's office keys and the keys of his safe in her handbag, and that the handbag was constantly lying on his consulting-room table. He decided, therefore, one day when leaving the room for a moment during the treatment, to take the handbag with him. This he not only contrived to do and to return it without his patient's knowledge, but whilst out of the room he took a wax impression of all the keys it contained, and had two sets made from this cast.

His next step was to engage the services of a suitable exponent of the art of burglary, and his selection fell upon a screwsman who readily undertook to put the set of new keys to practical purpose.

By sheer ill luck, however, on reaching the building wherein the office of the millionaire was situated, he approached the wrong office door, the door, as it subsequently turned out, of an office which had been empty for some little time. Into the keyhole of this door he inserted the key and endeavoured to turn it, with the unfortunate result that the key broke in the lock.

This fact, coupled with the arrest and imprisonment of the screwsman himself for another job shortly afterwards, suspended all the doctor's operations for the time being. He did not, however, abandon his scheme. On the contrary, he engaged another screwsman.

This screwsman was an American crook of inter-

national fame, an aristocrat in the criminal world and a workman, therefore, very worthy of his hire. At the invitation of the doctor he called to see him, and there took place in the consulting-room a consultation which had more to do with the intricacies of locks and keys than those of the human anatomy.

The doctor was prevented from taking another impression of the key himself, because the young lady had finished her treatment. He suggested therefore the expediency of his new confederate taking a room in the same house as that occupied by his former patient, and, once established there, using every means to gain the young lady's confidence until an opportunity presented itself to take an impression in wax of the key of the office door.

This the American agreed to do. He took the room without any difficulty, and it was not long before he was on such friendly terms with the young lady, that she invited him occasionally to converse with her in her own sitting-room.

He soon discovered that she took a great personal pride in the appearance of the front garden, so that one afternoon, when he had observed the presence of her handbag in the room, he took the opportunity whilst she was momentarily engaged elsewhere to step into the garden and to pull up a plant by the roots.

On her return he showed her the plant, remarking upon the damage done to the appearance of a

flower-bed by some marauding cat. The young lady rose to the bait, and, excusing herself, ran out into the garden to assess the amount of the disfigurement.

Immediately she departed, he took an impression of all the keys, having had the wax ready in his pocket for the advent of just such an opportunity as had occurred.

The same evening he took the wax impressions to the doctor, and in due course of time another office key was ready for use.

The next problem was the removal of the young lady from the scene of action, and this was easily solved—it may seem rather too easily solved—by the doctor inviting her to accompany him on a day's outing, and by her immediate acceptance of that invitation. Evidently she had a great regard for her medical adviser.

But once again a most disastrous hold-up occurred. In his anxiety to avoid placing the right key in the wrong door, the American most unfortunately placed the wrong key in the right door and it broke off. Thus the only thing to be done was to get another impression of this key, which was wanted, of course, for the further work inside the room.

This, however, he accomplished, and the young lady as easily accepted another invitation to be out of harm's way.

This time he succeeded in his project. He got into the millionaire's office. He opened the safe.

He found the cheque-book. He took out three cheque forms, carefully removing the counterfoils. He collected a bundle of cancelled cheques, and he looked for but discovered no jewellery. Finally, being a great crook, he took pains to leave the office as spick and span as he had found it.

On hearing of the results of his labours, the doctor was not so well pleased as his confederate expected him to be. He pointed out that the cancelled cheques were four years old, and therefore unreliable for the purpose of copying the signature, as in that space of time the millionaire might have altered it, however slightly. Further, he made it very plain indeed to the American that it was his private opinion that he *had* found the jewellery. This accusation of 'double crossing' did not improve the relationship of the two confederates. But for the time being they continued to work together as hitherto.

The next step was obviously to get an up-to-date sample of the millionaire's signature, and this the American eventually obtained by possessing himself of an autograph book shown him by the young lady, which contained, amongst other things, two recent testimonials of her ability signed by her employer.

This book the doctor and his accomplice took to a professional 'penman,' who, under their direction, duly filled in and signed two cheques, one for £819, and the other for £600.

The comparatively modest amounts of these

cheques were due to the fact that the American had discovered—and the discovery had been a great shock—that the millionaire's balance at his bank at the time was not, as had been supposed, £35,000, but only £3,700. Ready money, however, being as ever welcome in the crook world, it had been decided to go ahead at once and make sure of at least £1,419.

Next came the question of the cashing of the two cheques. For the accomplishment of this crucial piece of work the doctor employed another accomplice, but he decided to cash only one cheque at a time. This was accepted by the bank, and the American was informed, when he next called, that his share in the business so far was £115, working expenses having been heavy, and the cheque cashed being the one for £600.

As a matter of fact it was the cheque for £819 that had been cashed, the doctor evidently thinking that 'double crossing' was a game at which two may equally well play; though there is no reason to believe in this case that the American's story of the absence of the jewels from the safe was otherwise than the actual truth.

The doctor was anxious to pay his confederate the £115 in five-pound notes, but the latter, completely aware of the Yard's ability in note-tracing, insisted upon being paid in gold (this was in the year 1906).

This obliged the doctor to call in the assistance of a lady-love, whom he sent to Paris to get the



notes changed at Messrs. Thomas Cook's offices there. It was this lady who informed the American that the cheque that had been cashed was the one for £819.

On hearing this, he called on the doctor, and the result of the interview was a violent quarrel between the two men.

Not long after this had occurred, the American was arrested by the police on a charge of being concerned in the making and uttering of counterfeit coin, and was sentenced at the Old Bailey to ten years' penal servitude.

It was whilst he was awaiting trial for this offence at Brixton prison that he invited the officers in charge of his case to visit him, and on their doing so he betrayed the doctor, telling the police a plain account of the whole scheme (as yet only partly fulfilled) to rob the millionaire. Acting on his information, the prosecuting authorities were enabled to obtain sufficient independent corroboration of it to prefer a charge against the doctor, his lady-love who cashed the notes in Paris, his penman, and the passer of the cheque. The American appeared as the chief witness for the prosecution.

As a result the doctor received 7 years' penal servitude, the penman 5 years', the passer of the cheque 15 months', and the lady-love 9 months'.

The moral of this story for the artist is this: it is never wise to 'double cross' your confederates. Crooks, on business where their own interests are

concerned, have a very nice sense of honour and justice.

On a planet where money is an universal solvent of most of humanity's vexed problems, it is not at all surprising to discover that persons occasionally decide to manufacture notes and coins for themselves, and to 'utter' or pass these off upon their neighbours as the genuine currency of the realm.

One is given to understand that the wholesale price of a forged ten-shilling note is three shillings, and its retail price a shilling more, whilst the market price of a counterfeit half-crown is one shilling.

Thus in post-war days of paper money it is better to be a forger than a coiner.

The author has never personally witnessed the manufacture of counterfeit notes or coins. He was once invited by a coiner to observe the methods by which half-crowns can be readily produced, but he felt impelled to decline the invitation, though touched by the trust which had inspired it. One never knows positively when the police may elect to walk into the room, and it is exceedingly difficult, should they do so, to explain that one's presence amidst the 'cauldrons or pots or pans' is due merely to an academic interest and appreciation of art for art's sake. The chief problem of the student of crime at all times is to avoid figuring as an accessory before or after the fact. Hence the author's natural disinclination to figure as an accessory *during* the fact.

It is, however, permissible to possess one (if not

two) counterfeit coins as keepsakes. Thus, among the author's treasures is a half-crown which has always to be kept carefully apart from all others for fear lest it should permanently lose its individuality. Its market price may be one shilling, but its value to the author cannot be stated in terms of material worth.

Its manufacturer was a good-natured, delicate, hardly pressed young man who, in the general struggle for existence, decided to eke out a living by *making* his own wages. If he had any marked defect it was a tendency to be over-trustful in a profession where reticence is the primary virtue.

One day, when surrounded by his antimony, his plaster of Paris moulds, his spoons, and his saucepans, he was interrupted by the advent of two quite genial and matter-of-fact police officers. To these uninvited guests he said quite simply, "It is your business to find and mine to hide."

He then closed down his business for several months. It is needless to add 'the information received' did not emanate directly or indirectly from the author of these pages.

The art of 'uttering' or passing 'dud' half-crowns is straightforward, though that is, perhaps, not the most appropriate word. He who possesses the half-crowns gives a few (or if he be wise, only two) to the confederate whose duty it is to pass them. This latter partner goes into small tobacconists, chemists, or cafés, where he lays down the half-crown and asks for a sixpenny packet of cigarettes,

a Gillette razor blade, or some bars of chocolate, as the case may be. He thereby obtains two shillings, plus the articles in question. He can then, if he wishes, sell the articles again at a slightly reduced price to some *bona fide* tradesmen whose consciences are fully capable of the burden imposed upon them. If not, he keeps the articles for his own use, which accounts for the vast collections of cigarettes and chocolates found at times in the rooms of coiners and their assistants—collections which may quite easily and reasonably be cited by a counsel for the prosecution as ‘circumstantial evidence.’

Whether it pays in the long run to make half-crowns and sell them for a shilling each, or to pass them for two shillings and some cigarettes, is a question for the artists (if not ultimately also for the jury) to decide.

That a young friend of the author’s once purchased 100 half-crowns for £5, inclines him to believe that the trade must justify its practice.

But as we have written, it is more profitable, and in the world of criminal ethics, *better* therefore, to make Bank of England notes of the value of £1 or 10s., for no crook who can help it will have any dealings whatever with £5 notes unless they be genuine “bills” of the Bank of Engraving.

In tribute to the ability of this branch of the profession, the Bank of England maintains a special staff whose duty it is to detect spurious notes. At one time, one is given to understand, this

department included in its personnel an expert but retired forger, which if it be indeed true is a welcome instance of common sense in high places. Be this as it may, it is the business of this department to look out for the arrival of spurious notes, and therefore when last year (1930) large numbers of counterfeit ten-shilling notes began to make their appearance, the authorities of the Bank requested Scotland Yard to bring its activities to bear upon the matter.

It might come as a shock to many a good crook were he to know for how long he had been in the 'ken' of the Yard prior to his actual arrest. Information may be received at headquarters long before there is sufficient evidence obtained to justify the asking for a warrant, or it may be that the police are unwilling to mar the possibilities of a big haul by arresting an individual and thereby giving the alarm to his confederates.

It was thus in the case of the ten-shilling spurious notes. The police knew perfectly well that two men were engaged in the persistent sale of such notes. They knew the men by sight. They kept them under observation, but they refrained from arresting them for six weeks because they wanted first to discover the place where the notes were being manufactured, and then the appropriate moment at which to enter the room and catch the artists red-handed.

It must be quite obvious to anyone that in order for the police to obtain such requisite knowledge

they must rely not only on their own abilities as detectives, but upon the indiscretions of those who unwillingly provide information, and the observations of others who are police-spies. And fortunately for the purposes of the police, the criminal world is permeated with gossipers and 'narks.'

Thus it need surprise no reader to learn that one evening the police walked into the room at the very moment when four persons, three men and a woman, were busy at work surrounded by the whole paraphernalia of note-making, an iron printing-press, photographic plates, coloured inks, notes in various stages of production, and one note complete save for the head of the sovereign, which had yet to be added.

In their trial at the Old Bailey the artist-in-chief attempted to make the jury believe that when he bought the printing-press from a man whom he encountered at a greyhound race-meeting, he did not know that it had facilities for the manufacture of notes, and that when he found it had, he made some, as it were, by way of experiment. That he took a genuine pride in his art was revealed by his denying that the spurious notes which had reached the Bank of England were of his making. Had they been his, he deposed, they would have been better ones. This assertion on his part was evidently solicited by the remark of the Bank's expert witness to the effect that the spurious notes were passable though not, in his opinion, good forgeries.

The jury returned a verdict of guilty, and Mr. Justice McCardie passed sentence as follows: the artist-in-chief received 10 years' penal servitude; the chief utterer 8 years'; the other male confederate 6 years'. The woman went to prison for 6 months in the second division, for it is an everlasting extenuating circumstance on behalf of a woman that there is a woman in every case, and therefore in every coiner's or forger's den. She happened to be there. And on this occasion she happened to be hiding two ten-shilling notes just as the police officers entered. Hence six months at 'the Castle.'

On appeal, the sentence of 6 years' penal servitude passed on the confederate of the forgers was reduced to 18 months' hard labour, the reason being that he was the landlord of the forgers and though obviously cognizant of the uses to which his tenants were putting their rooms, he was not actually himself engaged in the operations when the officers entered.

Lest the reader may be a little depressed by the outcome of the forger's undertakings, it should at once be stated that there is no cause whatever for believing that the manufacture and supply of spurious notes has ceased in the land in consequence of these sentences.

The art of forgery in a less romantic way includes every attempt to pass off a spurious document as a genuine one, even if the document in question be merely a letter to oneself purporting to have been sent or written by another person.

Not very long ago there arrived upon my doorstep one morning a woman whom I recognized as being the devoted wife of an ex-prisoner whose acquaintance I had made in my prison-visiting days. She asked me whether by any chance I had sent a telegram to her husband the previous evening, requesting him to come and see me, for she said, "One arrived from you, addressed to him, and he at once put on his best clothes and went out."

"And what did you do?" I inquired.

"I put on mine, too," she said, "and came over here, just to make sure, and your place was in darkness. But I haven't said a word to him about it, though I know quite well in whose company he spent the evening."

I expressed my deep sympathy for the poor woman, for so far as I could gather this was the first time that the young husband had wavered in his fidelity to the mother of his children. But having known them quite well, I was not pessimistic for the future. They were a very happy couple, and I felt confident that the result of any experimental philosophy on his part with other women would only be to confirm in his mind the wisdom of his original choice. I was sorry that he had had recourse to a forged telegram, but I was touched that, in order to suggest to his wife an evening of respectability, he had signed it with my name.

In the days of the Great War, and at a time when Ciro's Club still flourished under the popular and



genial Luigi Naintré, there came to this familiar potentate of Clubland one morning a messenger boy bearing a letter, the contents of which were as follows :

‘Cher Luigi, I enclose cheque for £110. Keep £10 as commission, and send me by bearer £100. Should you not have sufficient, send all you can, and the balance will do at any time. I rely on your discretion in the matter. LONSDALE.’

That Lord Lonsdale might conceivably send such a message in a friendly way did not seem to Monsieur Naintré impossible, nor would he have hesitated a moment in meeting its request had it not been for the remark about keeping £10 as a commission. That Lord Lonsdale should write in this fashion to a gentleman of Monsieur Naintré’s standing seemed to him so incredible that, after telling the messenger boy to wait, he got into telephonic communication with Vine Street Police Station.

Directly Inspector Carlin, at that time in charge of the Station, heard his communication he told Monsieur Naintré to do up a parcel of paper suggestive of notes in an envelope, and to send this back by the messenger boy directly two police officers arrived at Ciro’s, whose duty it would be to follow him to the hotel from where he had been dispatched, and there to arrest the sender on suspicion.

This plan fell through, as by the time the trio reached the hotel the sender, who had evidently taken alarm at the delay, was conspicuous by his absence.

Later in the day Inspector Carlin examined the note, and at once recognized the handwriting as being that of a well-known forger of repute.<sup>1</sup> The note was compared with other specimens of this artist's handwriting in the archives of the 'Yard,' after which all that remained was to catch him.

This did not take very long, and on being taken to Vine Street, and being asked as is customary, after having his clothes searched, to sign the official inventory of his belongings, he signed it in the same handwriting as the cheque and note purporting to come from Lord Lonsdale.

The memory of the Inspector was the undoing of the artist, who, despite a plea of not guilty at the Old Bailey, was sentenced to five years' penal servitude.<sup>2</sup>

But sufficient has now been said upon the subjects of forgery and coining for the encouragement of any intelligent artist.

<sup>1</sup> The intelligence of the Force is without doubt grossly underrated by the public.

<sup>2</sup> An amusing and detailed description of this case is given by Ex-Chief Inspector Carlin in his *Memoirs*, already mentioned.

## SOME OTHER ASPECTS OF THE ART OF CONFIDENCE

As will have been amply realized already by the reader, it is the business of all good crooks to turn every situation to their own advantage. For that reason, perhaps, they acquire to a marked degree the habit of careful observation of the minds and ways of their fellow-beings.

In the natural course of such observations it dawned upon the mind of one artist that not all shopkeepers exercise the meticulous care which the Law demands they should exercise, in arranging that their outside shop blinds, when pulled down on their iron side-supports, shall be a given height above the pavement so as to avert the possibility of a passing pedestrian knocking his head.

Being a good judge of heights, this enterprising artist discovered a defaulting sun-blind, the property of a well-to-do tradesman in the best part of the West End, and at once resolved to put into force a little plan of action of his own, whereby an accident might be caused to occur.

Choosing a moment of the day when the street was well filled with people, and when a policeman was near at hand, he walked by the shop, immaculately clad in morning dress and high silk hat.

Members of the crowd next witnessed a most depressing accident occur. His silk hat came into violent collision with the cross-bar of the sun-blind. It was crushed into a pulp. He himself fell down on the pavement, and when assisted to arise was discovered to have a bad wound on his forehead. The policeman was called and a taxi-cab hailed. To the former the much-shaken gentleman gave his name and address and a few details of the accident, with suitable allusion to the sun-blind. He then climbed laboriously into the taxi, and asked to be driven to the house of his doctor.

Now his doctor was one of those members of the medical profession who are called by their crook patients 'straight' doctors. He was prepared, that is to say, to certify that anyone who had any particular reason for wishing to be suffering from the effects of an 'accident' was so suffering. He did so on this occasion, though it is possible he did not trouble to dress a wound which he may have known was an artificial one prepared and painted that morning. He consented, however, to enter his new patient's name on his books, and to treat him for a given period.

The artist next called upon his 'straight' solicitor, who was delighted to see him, and who at once set about writing to the owners of the sun-blind to sue them for damages to his client, whilst reminding them of their position should it turn out that their sun-blind fell short of the legal requirements.

As, however, the artist had taken great pains to

be assured on this point in advance, no anxiety was felt by the protagonists of the drama, nor were they at all surprised to find a readiness on the part of the owners of the blind to have the matter settled out of court.

The proceeds of the 'job' were then shared in appropriate portions by the artist, his solicitor, and his doctor.

'I suppose,' writes Charles Gordon, from whose valuable book, *Crooks of the Underworld*, this narrative is borrowed, 'it is fairly common knowledge that there are certain firms of solicitors abounding at the present day, which, whilst always keeping within the bounds of the Law, are ever ready to come into any "joke" introduced to them by the "grafter." If it should be a "tumble," the "grafter" becomes the "fall guy," and the solicitors ensure immunity from scandal by falling back upon the dignity of their profession.'

Such a firm on one occasion, he relates, asked him to specialize in this particular form of graft, namely the 'bringing about of accidents,' assuring him that it would bring him in an income of £2,000 a year. He turned down the proposal, however, when it was suggested that he should open operations by falling under a taxi-cab owned by one of the big companies. After all, he was an aristocrat of Crookdom and (at any rate in the eyes of the Police) the hero of the famous Treacle Plaster Robbery in the Blackfrairs Road, for which he was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude. He denied

this coup, however, and his denial was believed in many quarters.

He did not, nevertheless, scorn to stage 'a happening,' for although not personally the originator of the sun-blind episode above, he did succeed in securing heavy damages from a building company by 'bringing about an accident.'

Thus it is obvious that the old adage is true, and that 'pride can have a fall.'

The gentleman who collided with the sun-blind also found a blackbeetle in his soup at a restaurant which lived upon its reputation for good cooking, but we must refer the reader who desires to pursue this fascinating story, and many others, to the book itself.

It follows of necessity that confidence crooks make it their business at all times to respect human idiosyncrasies of belief and mental prejudices.

Thus, not a great while ago, an enterprising man of colour, who hied from Trinidad, had the good fortune to encounter a farmer in the isle of Jersey, who was firmly convinced that his household and crops had been put under a spell.

Very naturally the man from Trinidad offered to remove the spell, for, like other coloured members of his race, he was able easily to make the farmer believe that he had a better acquaintance with the principles of magic than any ordinary citizen of a white community could be calculated to possess, after so many centuries of contaminating rationalism.

So, after donning a red-girdled robe, and placing

on his head a red hat, he said he thought the evil spirits could be persuaded to depart if he were given a fee of £5, which, after all, was only a little in excess of the fee charged by any Harley Street magician for a preliminary consultation.

On receipt of the £5 he walked about the estate, muttering incantations, and, before departing, presented the farmer with a parcel containing a magic powder. The value of this gift was a little doubtful, for the farmer was enjoined on no account to open it, as if he did, fourteen members of his family would immediately die. The fact that with this certainty pending the farmer did not open the packet is, of course, greatly to his credit.

The magician also sold a magic ring to the farmer's wife, its value consisting chiefly in its occult powers, for its material worth could be easily computed in those coins which the Police always describe, when found on the person, as 'bronze,' possibly owing to the ambiguous meaning of the word 'coppers.'

But, contrary to all expectations, the 'spirits' declined to depart for the paltry sum of £5. This fact, be it said, was discovered on second thoughts, not by the farmer, but by the magician himself, who, returning, confessed that after deep contemplation he had come to the conclusion that in order to counteract the effects of the curse, once and for all, a further £20 10s. would be essential.

This the farmer paid, and there was a further demonstration of incantations and red girdles, and

on this occasion the doorposts were struck with a penknife.

But not long after came a letter saying all had been vain, and that the curse would still blight the farmer's household and crops unless within a given period a further sum of £65 was forwarded.

This the farmer's wife contrived to raise in the form of a loan from her father; and here the matter might have ended had not a further demand for £75 been received.

Then, and apparently not until then, were the farmer and his wife converted to a belief in the magic powers of the Police, with the result that the witch-doctor from Trinidad appeared before the local magistrates, and was sent by them to meditate for nine calendar months upon the principles of his art and their relationship to the criminal law, in that he had obtained by false pretences the sum of £90 10s.

After which one is tempted to imagine that another curse descended upon the unhappy farmer's household and his crops. Whether the packet containing the powder was produced as Exhibit No. 1; whether it was opened by order of the Crown; and if so, what would have been the position of the Crown should fourteen relatives have died within the period of one year and one day—we do not know.

But we are given to understand that up to the time of writing, the case of '*Rex v. Certain Evil*



Spirits and a Magician from Trinidad' has not been put up for hearing.

There is always a scope for the artist of these pages in the realms of the occult, because Human Nature has never entirely surrendered its belief in the powers of wizards and witches, incantations, spells, and charms. There are at all times persons ready to have their fortunes told, and ready, moreover, to confide the secrets of their hearts to total strangers.

It is the business of the crooks to make this a source of livelihood; for persons who confide, and who exhibit an interest in the occult, and who possess banking accounts, are never to be despised.

Thus the crook has ever kept his eye open to the possibilities offered by the popular respect for Occultism, Theosophy, and Spiritualism, in that these ways of thinking tend on the whole to bring together wealthy people in a receptive frame of mind. And where two or three wealthy people are gathered together, there is often to be seen a crook in their midst.

A lady of oriental charms, at one time known to the author, contrived very successfully to harmonize the teachings of the Christian Church with those of the Eastern Sages and the more modern exponents of occult wisdom. She attracted to her fold many impressionable spinster ladies who worked gladly at her bidding, whilst giving her that respect and adulation which she delighted to receive. One of these ladies did more. She handed

over all her savings. And when, at a later period, with a diminished ardour she requested the return of that which had been a loan and not a gift, she received a very worthless continental bond by way of settlement. We do not, of course, say this in any disparagement of the oriental lady. We always suspected that she was a woman of parts, and endowed with much *savoir faire*. We instance her activities merely in order to show what scope there may be for ladies of talent and determination, plus a knowledge of the occult, when dealing with those of their sisters who are lowly and humble of heart—and who possess a little money in the bank.

We are not suggesting that the oriental lady just mentioned was a professional artist within the meaning of Crookdom proper. Like many others, she may have been merely seeking scope for the display of her personality in a practical way; but she had without doubt discovered that which from the standpoint of the 'confidence man' is the royal road to success. She had, that is to say, grasped the fact that the powers which go to make the popular preacher, the prophet, the orator, the worker of miracles, the organizer of societies, the active chairman of committees, can be used for the purposes of deception, in that the majority of persons are at all times ready to be the dupes of those who capture their faith and imagination.

It was, one believes, Dr. Moll of Berlin who expressed the opinion, founded on clinical research, that 80 per cent. of the human race are hypnotiz-

able; which means that 20 per cent. are in the position and are gifted by nature to hoodwink the remainder. Nor does there seem to be any test by which the 80 per cent. can determine whether the 20 per cent. are or are not speaking the truth; it being the essence of faith that it is not and never can be knowledge.

Thus it is the business of the confidence crook to be one of the 20 per cent. of hypnotists, whose mission in life it is, *for widely differing reasons*, to galvanize the majority with their own faith.

And once to realize this is to cease to worry for ever as to the relationship of such synonymous terms as autocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and communism; for it is quite evident that at every moment in history, 80 per cent. of human beings are being hypnotized by 20 per cent.; and of the latter ruling minority a small yet reliable number are confidence crooks. It is all quite logical and easy of comprehension, an ascending scale of human magnets of varying powers and bundles and bundles of needles.

‘The astonishing thing,’ writes Mr. Basil Tozer, ‘is not that there are so many confidence crooks who are able to earn a livelihood by fooling the unsophisticated, but that there are not more.’

This writer, whose book on *Confidence Crooks and Blackmailers* cannot be too highly recommended as a manual for those who, educated at school, have little knowledge of the world for which they are preparing, draws attention in one of his para-

graphs to the skill with which the crook proper turned and turns to account the popular respect for the new psychological treatment advocated by the great psychologist Sigmund Freud.

No sooner had this idea become common knowledge than 'psycho-analysts' sprang up in all directions, persons who, devoid of any medical training, opened consulting-rooms where wealthy patients were accepted at extortionate fees, who, in response to advertisements in the Press, sought to have their mental worries dissipated by the aid of the new psychology.

Seated in a room lit by tinted light, made restful by subtle schemes of colour, and perfumed with the aroma of the Orient, a prepossessing man would invite an impressionable woman to tell him little by little at, say, thirty guineas a visit, the story of her life and the history of the conflicts of her emotions.

He would explain that the success of the treatment depended on her willingness to reveal her very inmost thoughts and longings. She must overcome her reluctance to confide in him the range of her imaginings and actions. In plain words, she must lay bare the secrets of her soul. Then with infinite calm within, he could help her to rebuild her mind on peaceful foundations.

Nor did his invitation fall on deaf ears, for many a woman longs to make a confession to a man she can trust; and if for reasons of her own that man cannot be her priest or her qualified physician, she gladly catches at this offer of a substitute who

promises to combine within his person the services of both. That he charges high fees does not seem to disarm her. Possibly she feels that whatever may be said to the contrary, the Kingdom of Heaven can only be bought at a high price. And, like most persons with worries, she craves for peace within.

So she reveals the secrets of her inmost soul to the sympathetic priest-like physician in the tinted, coloured, perfumed room—and it may be that, like the custodian of the great Apostle, she may be able at length to say, 'At a great price obtained I this freedom.'

On the other hand, she may find the price greater than she imagined, for the information she has so gratuitously supplied may be used against her for the purposes of blackmail.

Thus persons taken in charge by crook physicians should, like persons taken in charge by police officers, be cautioned lest information thus provided may be used in evidence against them.

But, as we have already said, the practitioners need have no fear of any slump in their business, for do not the psychologists themselves admit that 80 per cent. of God's creatures stand to attention when commanded to do so by their spiritual superiors, be they angels of light or princes of darkness?

## THE ART OF JENNY DIVER

BETWEEN the realms of the confidence crook and the robber moves the furtive figure of the pick-pocket or 'hook,' a department of the profession which has ever made its appeal to the fairer sex.

Of all specialists in this exacting branch of art, none is more worthy of mention than that delicious product of the eighteenth century, Mary Young, whose name got changed to 'Jenny Diver' by her admirers, because her dips into the lucky tubs of her neighbours' pockets were so consistently successful as to merit this sobriquet.

Her history has been oft recorded, but we venture to outline it here yet once again, because she embodied in her own personality the heights to which the art can attain when suitably presented to the public.

Jenny was born in North Ireland early in the eighteenth century, and like so many of the world's great intellects, had the good luck to be born of poor parents and the far better luck to escape being sent to school. By this means she was saved from that arrest of mental development which is the natural fate of those who are condemned to the servitude of the classroom and forbidden to educate themselves by experimenting with the

facts of life in accordance with their own individual promptings.

Jenny escaped the machine which turns out ready-made minds with such lamentable accuracy, being born out of due time for the accomplishment of this national miracle. Instead, she was educated by a lady whose servant she became at the age of ten. This lady encouraged her to learn both how to read and how to write, whilst not allowing these arts to interrupt unduly her household duties, nor to become disassociated in her mind with their daily performance. It is not recorded whether she taught her the third 'R'; it may have been in Jenny's case unnecessary, for she possessed quite obviously a natural sense of the mysteries of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, as her after-life displayed. Like all wise persons, she subtracted before she added and multiplied, or even thought of dividing.

But her mistress taught her, by way of compensation, how to sew. And since she succeeded in these accomplishments beyond the usual measure of her years, she was able at the age of fifteen to feel that she was ready to enter the battle of life as a woman of self-reliance, dependent upon her own wits.

In addition, the better to further her own plans, she permitted a young man of the neighbourhood to confess his passion for her. She had very little personal regard for him, but she thought he might be of value to her at the commencement of her career. She told him, therefore, that if he would

take her to Liverpool, on arrival at that seaport she would become his wedded wife.

The young man, being delighted beyond measure at so pleasing a prospect, very sensibly at once robbed his master of a gold watch and eighty guineas, and booked a passage for two. And away they sailed.

On arrival at Liverpool they stayed in that city for a day or so in order, as the chronicler so politely says, 'to get over the effects of the voyage,' it being their intention subsequently to 'take the wagon' to London.

But in the case of the prospective bridegroom this was not to be, for whilst he was still in Liverpool, a messenger arrived from Ireland with an invitation from his former master to come back to Erin.

Both he and Jenny were taken before the Mayor of Liverpool, in whose presence the young man pleaded guilty to his theft, but did not implicate his mistress. Jenny held her tongue and was suffered to depart in peace. This she did very quickly, partly because she had ten guineas in her pocket which the young man had given her, and partly because she wished to lose herself in London at the earliest opportunity.

Her lover was escorted back to Ireland, where he was sentenced to death, but ultimately was transported to the colonies. On the whole, Jenny had little cause for grief. She had reached England, she had money in her pocket, and she had got rid of a rather tiresome companion.



On reaching London she went by a sure instinct to Long Acre, where she took a room in the house of one Ann Murphy, having struck up a casual acquaintance with this woman on the strength of their mutual obligations to the country of their birth.

Ann was herself a seasoned crook and a member of a West End gang of pickpockets, but being a discreet woman she decided to watch her young protégée for a while before she revealed to her the mysteries of the profession.

Jenny attempted at first to earn her living by her needle, but being unable to secure a market for her work, and faced with impending poverty, she very soon reached that state of mind which made her ready to listen to anything Ann Murphy might have to say upon the matter.

Ann bade her be of good cheer, adding that if she would promise never to reveal a secret, she would that very evening introduce her to a highly select club in the neighbourhood, of which she was herself a member; and that once she was admitted to this circle of friends she would find that she need no longer worry over the solution of her present mathematical problems. They would speedily solve themselves, as she would soon discover.

Jenny was thrilled, and counted the hours to sundown. Nor was she disappointed, for 'at the very witching hour of eve' she set forth with Ann to the purlieu of St. Giles, where there existed at

this period the same kind of clubs as flourish in London to-day in and around the same neighbourhood, places, that is to say, where crooks congregate to exchange the news of the day, to transact business, to compare results, and to apportion claims.

The 'club' to which Jenny was introduced, chaperoned by Ann, was a pickpockets' club, the members of which made it their business to cut off ladies' pockets (the fashions of the eighteenth century being more convenient, and bag-snatching not having as yet been forced into being as a substitute) and steal watches from gentlemen who frequented the theatres and places of public resort.

Jenny was very well received by the gang, and on the sponsorship of Ann was elected a member of the club, it being understood by her that she could not expect to receive her full share of the profits until she had become proficient in the art—a matter of hard practice. By way of encouragement, however, she was given that very night the sum of two guineas when, after separating for the evening's work, the gang returned with eighty pounds in cash and a gold watch.

This afforded her great pleasure. She studied diligently for two hours a day at the difficult art of the expert thief, until she was acknowledged by the rest of the gang to be the most proficient artist of them all.

Firmly established in her new circle of acquaintanceship, she 'singled out,' writes the chronicler,

'a young fellow of genteel appearance who was a member of the club, as the partner of her bed; and they cohabited for a considerable time as husband and wife.'<sup>1</sup>

She next set herself seriously to work out new methods of successful approach in the practice of her art. She found it to be a good idea to dress as a lady of wealth and position, and to attend fashionable churches for divine service. Members of the congregation, she observed, had no contempt for worldly adornment, and she was able as a rule to secure some watch or ring during the progress of her devotions. In order the better to achieve this purpose, she invented a pair of false arms and hands which remained in calm repose while their natural counterparts were in active motion.

Likewise she found it convenient, with the aid of some skilful padding, to simulate the condition of a pregnant woman. This she did because she discovered that if under these conditions she fell on the ground in some popular parade of fashion, such as St. James's Park, a crowd would at once collect, and whilst some members of it offered her assistance and sympathy, the rest of her gang had ample opportunity to pick their pockets and possess themselves of their watches.

Later again she took apartments, setting up as a lady of fashion who, though married, was not averse in her husband's absence to the visits of any young gallant of wealth and social prestige who,

<sup>1</sup> *The Chronicles of Crime*, Vol. I, Camden Pelham.

meeting her at the play, might surrender to her charms and crave an early appointment.

On such occasions her methods were brief and to the point. Ann Murphy played the rôle of the confidential maid, while her 'genteel companion' aforementioned played the historic part of the 'husband' whose sudden and unexpected return in the middle of the night would compel her to forsake her bedfellow and in his own interests (so she said) to remove all his clothes into another room.

Thus provided with all his possessions, he having been encouraged to appear in her presence in his best attire preparatory to enjoying the privilege of removing it, she would leave the house with her confederates, while the landlord would demand from his hostage the next morning the payment of her arrears of rent as the price of his silence.

She would change her methods from time to time as discretion prompted, relying always on her extraordinary powers of inspiring confidence wherever she went.

One day, accompanied by her gallant of the gang attired as her manservant, she made a progress to the eastern end of the town, when, noting a favourable-looking house, she told him to knock at the door and, saying that his mistress was taken suddenly unwell, to ask whether she might rest there for a few moments.

The lady of the house was most compassionate. Jenny was invited to her own room, while the manservant was invited to sit in the kitchen. The

hostess busied herself seeking remedies for her guest's *malaise*, and whilst thus occupied Jenny, left to herself, opened a drawer and took possession of sixty guineas. She also contrived, while the lady was holding smelling-salts to her nose, to pick her pocket. After this she recovered rapidly, and, telling her hostess that she was the wife of a City merchant, she invited her to dine at an early date. Then calling her manservant, she gratefully took her leave. And when they were at a safe distance from the house, this enterprising man produced from his person six silver spoons, a pepper-box, and a salt-cellar to show that his leisure in the kitchen had been applied to a constructive purpose.

Thus did the fortunes of the gang amass while they worked under her direction, usually in London, but sometimes, by way of variation and discretion, in the provinces.

But, as must needs be the case, the hour at length struck when Jenny made her first appearance at the Old Bailey, she having been caught in the act of picking a man's pocket. She was sentenced to be transported to Virginia, but by the time she set sail she had contrived, during a four months' residence at Newgate, to purchase a whole wagon-load of stolen goods, the English prison system of those days being far more humane from an artist's point of view than it has since become. She left Newgate in peace with all her luggage, and, owing to her wealth, travelled in comparative comfort to America.

Not finding the inhabitants of Virginia at all amenable to the requirements of her profession, she made love to a young gentleman who was returning to England, and being invited to accompany him home, on arrival at Gravesend she contrived to go ashore alone, possessed of all his money, and, remarkable to relate, she did not return to the ship.

Instead, she did what every crook always does. She made for the old haunts of the Metropolis and began a search for her friends. Unsuccessful in her quest, she worked alone for a while, but her luck had turned. She was again arrested, and charged with picking a pocket. At her trial she gave the name of Jane Webb, and there being in those days no finger-print department, her previous conviction escaped the notice of the court. The jury found her guilty, but assessed the value of her theft at one shilling. She was again transported.

Twelve months later, however, she was once more hard at work in the Metropolis, and had evidently established a new, or rediscovered her old, circle of acquaintanceship; for her last professional act was to acquire the amount of thirteen shillings and one penny from a lady who had accepted the offer of a strange gentleman to hand her across a bad piece of roadway. Whilst doing so he squeezed her fingers, causing her much pain, and under the influence of this emotion, Jenny deprived her of her money. But the lady did not suffer her to depart in peace. She caught hold of

her gown, with the result that Jenny was arrested and taken to the Compter.

On her third appearance at the Old Bailey, she was sentenced to be transported to Eternity.

Like every great artist of that period, when faced with this eventuality she behaved in a very traditional manner. She responded to the counsels of the chaplain and prepared herself for the next world with appropriate devotional exercises. She commended her child of three years of age to the care of a woman, exhorting her to bring it up in the tenets of the Faith. On the morn of her execution she was calm in mind. Accompanied by the chaplain, she drove by coach to Tyburn, where she suffered the last penalties of the Law.

Her body was buried at her own request in the village churchyard of St. Pancras, on May 18, 1740.

That she had raised the profession of the pick-pocket to a far higher level than she found it, few will be disposed to deny who have weighed the artistic claims of this remarkable woman. She laid the foundations of the 'husband' trick in a graceful and polite manner, and she remains for ever the inventress of false arms and hands for use during divine service. She showed also, once and for all, the commercial value of pregnancy, and she died in the odour of sanctity.

Among the calendar saints of Newgate she must ever rank as the patron of pickpockets, as must May 18th figure in the annals of the profession as All Thieves' Day.

The art of Jenny Diver has never ceased to thrive, nor have its methods undergone any profound change since her day, save that changing fashions necessitate passing adaptations of skill. Thus to-day those who might formerly have picked the pockets of ladies, snatch their bags; a rather crude form of performance and scarcely worthy of the great tradition, but a necessary result of the reluctance of the women of to-day to keep their purses in their dresses. One must bear in mind the fact that the bag came first and the bag-snatcher second. Thus his disappearance will depend, not on any treatment meted out to him at the Old Bailey, but on the failure of women to carry bags in public, should that day dawn.

Men, however, being the more conservative sex in matters of adornment, enable the pickpocket still to retain his name and to live up to the standards of time-honoured skill with respect to the seizure of watches and wallets, it being no longer a very profitable pursuit to steal handkerchiefs.

Pickpockets still work in gangs, for the successful picking of a pocket depends very greatly on the distraction of the subject's attention at the critical moment and the manœuvring him into a convenient position for the artist's purpose. And this, of course, requires the assistance of more than one person.

The training of a pickpocket or 'hook' is as serious a matter as the schooling of a prestidigitator or exponent of the art of sleight of hand. Hours of practice are necessary to produce the



flexibility and deftness of fingers essential to the artist. He practises on his fellow-thieves the twin and most difficult operations of 'fanning' and 'reefing': to 'fan' being to pass the hands over a subject's clothes so as to ascertain in which pocket he has his wallet; to 'reef' being to extract the contents of a pocket with the first two fingers, both operations being performed without the subject becoming aware of the fact.

Strictly speaking, 'bag-snatching' is not a department of the 'hook's' art at all. It requires no skill, and is in reality a form of highway robbery in which anyone can indulge. One mentions it in this connection only because, as we have said, the woman of to-day by her change of fashions has fallen out of the hands of the genuine pickpocket into those of the highway robber, creating for his express benefit a new means of attaining his ends.

Nearer to the true pursuit is the art of the 'hoister' or 'shop-lifter,' who turns to advantage the flamboyant displays of the present-day stores and shops. These shop-thieves often work in gangs, and pool the proceeds of their achievements.

One of the problems of Metropolitan Magistrates nowadays is to distinguish the professional from the amateur among those who come before them charged with the latter offence—a problem which is usually solved by the previous history of the defendant's claims to recognition.

Thus there appeared in the dock of a London Police Court one morning a widow of forty-five

years of age who had, it transpired, purloined from Messrs. Harrods, Ltd., two dress lengths, a book, 1 lb. of tea, two tins of sardines, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. of chocolates, total value £1 7s. 10d. Evidently she was doing a little household stock-taking in a modest and reasonable way, but since she had previous convictions dating back thirty years, had only been released from prison three weeks earlier, and had a bank balance of £137, the magistrate, whilst doubting whether he ought not to send her for trial, gave her the benefit of summary jurisdiction to the extent of three months. That she was an artist there could be little doubt.

Nor could a magistrate have any marked reason for withholding artistic credit to two young women who 'lifted' between them eleven robes from the emporium of John Barker & Co., of Kensington. The number taken justified the allegation that they were genuine thieves. Further, they pleaded guilty, while it was produced in evidence that on being approached by two plain-clothes detectives in the shop, they at once said, "You need not tell us you are police officers. You look what you are."

Experienced crooks are usually able at all times to recognize members of the Force. One glance is sufficient.

In the case of the male shop-lifter, he is as a rule accompanied by his wife, whose duty it is, after the manner of all collectors, to hold the bag open ready for any contribution which may be dropped quickly into it, and thankfully received.

But to return to the genuine 'hooks.'

A friend of the author's one evening observed the approach of a gentleman who had dined not wisely but too well. He was fashionably dressed, and in his tie reposed a glittering tie-pin or 'prop.' As he hove into nearer vision, a stranger who was walking in the opposite direction, and who evidently miscalculated his swaying progress, collided with him, cursed him, and hastily withdrew. No longer did any tie-pin glitter in the night.

"I was sorry," observed my friend, "for I had intended to take it myself."

'Props,' however, are less popular than of yore, so that the highly skilled art of 'lifting' them whilst requesting a light for one's cigarette languishes.

It goes without saying that those who delight in the casual companionship of the 'ladies of the town' may unconsciously provide them opportunities to profit by the intensity of their emotions, for whilst occupied with the contemplation of ravishing beauty, one is apt to be singularly off one's guard. No one understood this psychological fact better than did the late lamented 'Chicago May,' who contrived by means of a noiseless sliding panel to have her patron's pockets examined by a confederate in the next room while she engaged his complete attention in her own; though she was quite capable, if occasion demanded, of doing the 'fanning and reefing' without such human and mechanical aids.

In her chapter on 'Criminal Jargon' in *Her*

*Story*,<sup>1</sup> Chicago May has many illuminating hints on the subject of 'panelling.'

"Panelling has certain advantages," she writes, "over other forms of stealing. The chief reason for this is that some men are satisfied to have a good time playing cards or drinking. It is easy to heat the room to excess and set the example of taking off coats and other clothing. A heavy chair is placed with its back to the sliding panel in a wall or door, the victim's coat is thrown over the chair, and the victim is seated with his back to the works. The game does not always work out as planned. The John may have his dough in his trousers or a money belt, or in three or four places about his person. Then tactics have to be changed.

"The panel may be placed at the back of the bed. The sucker hangs his clothes on the only place allowed to be available—the bed-post or a clothes-tree—wherever he hangs them is where the trap is set.'"

So much for a general description of the methods employed by this resourceful woman, who considerably adds: 'In case the prey is drugged, there is no need to bother with elaborate machinery.'

Without doubt she was in many ways the spiritual successor of Jenny Diver, and had she lived in the latter's time it is probable that she would have died at Tyburn instead of in a hospital. That she

<sup>1</sup> *Chicago May, Her Story* (Sampson Low).

never repented publicly of her deeds was due, not to any lack of artistic appreciation for tradition, but to the fact that she lived at a period in history when such sacrifices are no longer required, the value of death-bed recantations of the considered opinions of a lifetime having declined.

For the benefit of the up-to-date Londoner it may be observed that despite the existence of the Vagrancy Act of 1898 and the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, there exists and there will doubtless always exist the male prostitute, whose activities only fall within the scope of these pages in so far as he may also decide to practise as a blackmailer, a robber with violence, or a pick-pocket, or possibly as all three.

In certain parts of the West End there wait nightly youths of attractive personality whose hope it is that gentlemen with wallets and watches will engage them in conversation and be decoyed by them into some convenient side-alley where they may be attacked and robbed. Alternatively the youths are ready to return with the gentlemen to the latter's flats, from which they will not depart empty-handed. In the pursuit of their calling they are encouraged by the existence of the above-named Laws, in that because of them their customers will, they hope, be afraid to prosecute. And one is disposed to believe that their optimism in this respect is entirely justified.

Thus, from the standpoint of the crook, one hopes these curious laws may never be repealed.

Their effect on human behaviour is not very marked, but they have this to be said perennially in their favour: they preserve alive prejudices which depend for their validity upon the beliefs of a pre-scientific age, and that, in a conservative country like our own, must be accounted a point in their everlasting favour.

Young men, therefore, whose desire it may be to acquire renown as blackmailers, robbers with violence, or even as exponents of the honourable profession of the 'hook,' may humbly thank, if not heaven, then their stars that in England the Law is of greater assistance to themselves than to their customers.

That these youths may be pickpockets is natural enough, nor is it necessary that in order to be such they should possess any great skill or need the help of any confederate. Throughout, their methods border, as do those of the bag-snatcher, on those of the robber with violence whose activities we must consider in the next chapter, for they are far removed from the confidential and intimate methods of approach of the patron saint of pickpockets, sweet Jenny Diver, *née* Mary Young.

## ROBBERY WITH AND WITHOUT VIOLENCE

A MAN of means, who was in a good position in the business world, and who lived in a suburb of London near to a famous common, entered into conversation one evening with a young woman who accosted him in the street. Together they repaired to the saloon bar of a neighbouring tavern, where, in an upstairs room, was a young man who on being informed that she had a 'mug' in tow, remarked to a friend in the hearing of a barman, "There is a man downstairs with some money. Come out."

A little later the young woman accompanied her newly found companion to the common, his object being, so he said subsequently, merely conversation; and it is certain that he had no time for anything more, for scarcely had they reached the common before the young man already mentioned rushed up, saying "Do you know you are talking to my wife?" At which the other replied, "I am sorry, I did not know it."

The young woman then snatched away his walking-stick, handing it to her accomplice, who proceeded to belabour their prey, striking him on the face, and leaving him on the ground in a dazed

condition, his face covered with blood and his teeth broken.

They then robbed him of a diamond tie-pin, some papers he had in his pocket, his money, and a cigarette-case, while the man tried unsuccessfully to wrench off a signet ring from his finger.

After their departure he managed to struggle to a police station and to describe the events of the evening, with the result that his assailants were discovered, arrested, and charged, the man with robbery with violence, and the woman with theft, the gentleman's private papers being found in her possession.

They appeared before the Recorder at the Old Bailey, who sentenced the woman to 3 years' detention in a Borstal Institution, and the man to 18 months' hard labour and 18 lashes of the 'cat,' at which he laughed, saying, "Is that all?"

Whilst not for a moment questioning the right of society to revenge itself upon the robbers it catches in this manner, it may be of interest to the reader to hear the opinion of a relative of mine who was Governor of Bristol Gaol in the good old days, when the English prisons were run on lines suited to the beliefs of the apostles of severity.

Giving evidence before a Select Committee of the House of Lords in 1863, Mr. James Anthony Gardner spoke as follows:

"I have flogged at one period 162 prisoners in one year, and I am perfectly satisfied that it



did no good. The only good that flogging will do in my opinion is in cases of breaches of prison discipline. When a man is at large he commits an offence in the hope of never being found out; he risks it, in fact. When he is in gaol he is found out directly."

My relative was no sentimentalist, and the gaol he governed was said to be the most dreaded in the kingdom by the crooks of the period; so much so that many took pains to commit their crimes outside its territory.

Meanwhile the crook of to-day who specializes in highway robbery may take consolation from the philosopher Nietzsche, who grandly and scientifically exclaimed on a certain occasion, "That which does not kill me strengthens me," a remark which we commend with respect to the learned judges, and to all great artists.

But to proceed with the theme of robbery and the methods of its enterprising exponents.

It is the business of the robber to keep a careful watch upon the movements of those of his fellow-citizens who carry about money in public, to observe the carelessness of employers who dispatch them on their errands unguarded, and to lay schemes how best to profit by so desirable a state of affairs.

Thanks to the invention of the motor-car and the relative ease in obtaining one when required, the crook of to-day can work his provincial jobs

from his headquarters in London, swooping down like a hawk upon its prey when the moment for capture is at hand, and departing as quickly when the deed has been accomplished.

In such cases there will very probably be three or four persons engaged in the job, the layer of the information—perhaps a former bank clerk or near relative of the chosen victim—the robber in chief, the driver of the car, and perhaps an assistant. For weeks very likely before the robbery takes place it will have been planned and discussed in detail. An actual rehearsal of all but the act itself may possibly have been carried through. Nothing will have been left to chance, and provided no unforeseen element enters into the situation at the eleventh hour, there should exist no reason for anticipating failure.

The informant engages his robber, and the robber engages his assistants, all, at any rate for the period of the transaction in hand, reposing confidence in the integrity of each other; for although 'honour among thieves' be a maxim of shaky reputation, all alike acknowledge the validity of the adage, 'Honour for money's sake.' Not even crooked business can be done without some recognized code of morals, and far more would be accomplished than is the case were it not for the presence in the crook world of its greatest vice, namely unpunctuality in keeping appointments.

Many a job fails because one of the gang is not found seated in a particular small café at a

particular hour, as arranged the evening before. He cannot be found—and that is a greater problem in crook circles than in the realms of respectability, in that large numbers of artists find it convenient to have no known address. Thus looking for a crook pal means a laborious round of inquiry in many small taverns and cafés, in some of which the object of one's quest may be discovered, but not always.

This may, of course, mean that he was 'knocked off,' or fell into the hands of the police the previous evening, appeared at Bow Street that morning, and is now slumbering in peace at Brixton at the commencement of a week's remand. Or it may mean he has met a girl, and has found her more attractive than the job in contemplation. Or it may mean he has 'got cold feet' or has reconsidered the risks entailed, or it may mean many other things. But that is Crookdom. "The certain thing about the crook world," said a young robber to me, "is its uncertainty."

A very good example of a high-class robbery was the famous Treacle Plaster job in the Blackfriars Road some years ago.

It had come to the knowledge of Crookdom that a certain firm of furriers were wont on a particular morning of the week to send the cashier of the firm to cash a cheque at the bank for the payment of the week's wages. It was known that he would be returning with the money to the firm's offices in Holland Street about 11 a.m., and

that he would pass by the outside of a small subway which forms a short cut between Holland Street and Blackfriars Road under the Goods Station. Further, it had been ascertained that the entrance to this subway had iron gates which were normally closed at nightfall, but which were open at this hour.

The plan, therefore, was for four men to attack the cashier at this point, to thrust a paper covered with treacle into his face, to seize the bag containing the money, to dash into the subway, to slam the iron gates, to padlock them with a padlock brought for the purpose, to escape at the other end of the subway into the main road, where no one would be aware of what had happened in the other street.

This scheme was carried into practical effect. One man applied the treacle plaster, another held the cashier's arms, and a third seized the bag containing, as it turned out, only £51. Everything went according to plan, the only snag being that a passer-by who witnessed the attack pursued them, and when they slammed the iron gates in his face, he had time to scrutinize their features, subsequently identifying them to the police when they had been arrested on suspicion.

At their trial two of the men put up an alibi to the effect that one of them had only that morning been released from Wormwood Scrubs Prison at 8 a.m., and that he had been met at the gates by the other. Further, that both of them had taken a

taxi to the house of some friends at King's Cross, in whose company they had been at the time of the robbery. And these friends corroborated this on oath.

Unfortunately, however, it is possible to be outside the gates of Wormwood Scrubs Prison at 8 a.m., at King's Cross at 9 a.m., and at Blackfriars in plenty of time for a job at 11 a.m. The passer-by, moreover, identified them, and the police found at their rooms a replica of the padlock placed on the gates, that being one of an unusual pattern. Also, the witnesses for the alibi at King's Cross turned out, on cross-examination, to be very seasoned and experienced artists themselves. Thus two robbers received 7 years' penal servitude each, and the other two, being found guilty, in addition of being habitual criminals, received 5 years' penal servitude each, to be followed by a similar amount of preventive detention.

One of the first two robbers maintained after his release that he had never in his life seen the subway in the Blackfriars Road, and his statement was accepted as possibly true by his defending counsel and as quite true by the prison chaplain.

To this kindly official the robber had remarked on his release, "What is the use of my still saying that I am innocent if I am not, seeing that I have done the seven years and they can't give them back to me?"

Whilst not for a moment questioning the possible innocence of the originator of the last remark, it

does nevertheless seem to us that there would be great advantages in maintaining one's innocence after serving seven years' penal servitude, if one desired to retire from Crookdom or, in its own language, to 'swallow the anchor.'

The general public are far more inclined to help a man whom they believe, or can be brought to believe, has been wronged than one whom they think has merely squared his account with society.

Thus, whether Mr. Gordon (to give him his *nom de plume*) did or did not partake in the Treacle Plaster job—and we are by no means certain that he did—we think that in either case his assertion of his innocence quite sensible and calling for no apology on his part whatever.

We have described the Treacle Plaster Robbery as a high-class piece of work because it illustrates to perfection the intelligence brought to bear on its careful planning. One point alone about it puzzles us. We cannot but believe that the robbers must have been wrongly informed as to the amount of money likely to be in the cashier's bag. Such a job was surely worth more than £51, and especially when it be borne in mind that four men were concerned in its operation.

To risk a long sentence of penal servitude and possibly the 'cat' for about £12 each seems to us to have been an unlikely undertaking on the part of experienced robbers.

Thus, if the planners of this enterprise really did know the sum of the contents of that bag, we

are quite prepared to believe that Mr. Gordon had no hand in it, for he was at the time a crook of high standing and accustomed to deal in thousands and not fifties—and therefore far less so in twelves.

But the affair remains shrouded in mystery. Only the late ex-Chief Inspector Carlin was quite sure about what actually happened. It is, however, the greatest virtue of the C.I.D. to be omniscient at all times. Its motto is 'We know.'

Robbery with violence is a form of undertaking which appeals not only to the intelligent crook, but to his inferior, the brainless.

Thus, not very long ago a young man of 32 years of age, who was employed by a maiden lady as her gardener, called one evening at the house, saying he had left a spanner behind. Invited by the lady, who herself opened the door, to search for it, he accompanied her into the kitchen. Arrived here, he seized her suddenly by the throat, and, snatching a hammer from the wall, he proceeded to strike her several times with it on the head, fracturing her skull. He then searched the house, took £7, and departed.

Five days later he broke into an hotel, where he obtained £80 worth of jewellery. He had been educated at a reformatory school.

We cite this example here to show the crudeness of the methods employed by those in the lowest forms of the school of crime. He received 6 years' penal servitude, it being the intention of the

Judge, apparently, to protect society against him for  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years when, if a well-behaved prisoner, he will be released on licence, improved by the knowledge he may have acquired within.

Had the maiden lady succumbed to her wounds, society would have been permanently protected from the bad workmanship of this uncultured crook. But she recovered, and a plea of guilty to robbery with violence was accepted by the Crown.

Some robbers incline to the opinion that unprotected local post offices are specially suited for surprise attacks, and particularly if one be furnished with a revolver. The revolver need not be loaded, its object being mainly to inspire respect.

Thus a young man of 26, who was the secretary of a club, on finding that his accounts were £20 short and that the sum in question had to be paid out the day following, conceived the happy idea of raiding the local post office at its closing hour.

The better to strengthen his hand, he took a revolver (loaded with blank cartridges) and a bag of pepper. Approaching the post office just as it was closing, he asked the solitary woman in charge of it if he were too late, and on being informed he might enter, he did so, asking her for a shilling postal order. Whilst she was occupied in getting it for him, he suddenly presented the revolver, fired it twice, and threw the pepper in her face. He then attempted to seize the £27 in notes and silver that were lying about. The postmistress, however, grappled with him very courageously,



and her screams brought assistance to the spot. He was arrested.

For this little episode he was ordered twelve strokes of the 'cat,' and six months in the second division.

One doubts, whether either of the last two robbers are worthy to be called 'crooks proper.' The idea that anyone has the right to call himself a crook cannot be too severely discountenanced. Not everyone who paints is an artist. And the crook world suffers painfully from its daubs.

We hope these two young men may be reformed or certified. They are not fitted by nature or intelligence to be professional crooks.

And here, for the benefit of the reader, let it be emphasized that the holding up of a post office or a booking office is an affair demanding a vast amount of careful forethought and patient reconnoitring. No crook of standing would ever dream of doing such a job on the spur of the moment, or until he had satisfied himself in advance that the prize to be obtained was of a magnitude to justify the risk of the undertaking.

No crook has any desire to be flogged and sent to penal servitude. A flogging is physically most painful, and the notoriety of a trial on such a charge is very bad for future business, as is indeed anything which draws public attention to the person of an artist. He will not be deterred by the thought of the flogging and the penal servitude, but they will induce him to exercise the greatest

care in the carrying out of his work. To this extent, therefore, they serve a constructive purpose.

And here let it be said that the intelligent crook takes no delight whatever in doing violence to anyone. He injures persons only when they most foolishly fail to recognize that for the time being he is 'top dog,' and decline to submit to the inevitable. All he requests them to do is to hold their tongues and remain onlookers until he has collected what he has come to take. If instead they put up a fight, they compel him to employ violence. After all, the modern robber is simply the ancient highwayman. He no longer says, "Your money or your life." Times have changed. He says in effect, "Money or a knock on your head"; "Money or pepper in your eyes"; "Money, or I tie you up." The alternatives have changed, but the object remains the same. He still wants money, and if he can he will take it.

There are forms of robbery, however, in which normally violence to the person plays no part, and amongst these may first be mentioned the popular practice of bag-snatching.

Bag-snatching in the form of the 'lifting' of suitcases from waiting cars, or from buses, or from railway stations, is an old-established branch of the business, and is always an occupation open to those who are prepared to take chances and risk disappointment, for it is impossible to foresee what the contents of a valise may be, or to determine in advance their negotiable value.

On the other hand, in this line of trade as in all others, there is scope for genius and imagination. Thus it was the habit of one luggage thief to carry with him a variety of stick-on labels, with names and addresses written on them, so that one of such could be immediately fixed to any article taken. This artist, when arrested, had carried off two suitcases from the station hall at Euston with contents valued respectively at £30 and £100. In his rooms were found articles linking him with many other station robberies, so that his retirement at the suggestion of the magistrate for twelve months was a rest well earned.

His police history revealed the fact that before he specialized in the art of the luggage thief, he had made a hobby of collecting musical instruments from the dressing-rooms of music-halls. In the eyes of the authorities he was a very reputable crook.

If the luggage thief be a man of engaging personality, he may possibly find it advantageous to offer to guard the luggage of a spinster lady of reassuring carriage while she takes her ticket at the booking office; there being nothing more distracting to a traveller's attention than the conversation with the booking clerk. Or again, he may pose as a porter in the holiday season when hand luggage is much to the fore, though this last practice has been somewhat reduced in value owing to the increased vigilance of the railway police.

Less expert knowledge and powers of observation are called for in the case of those who snatch

the handbags carried by the women of to-day who have already lost their pockets.

No one more than the crook welcomed the disappearance of the Victorian petticoat with its recesses of moderate safety for the secretion of a purse. He observed with growing appreciation the quandary in which the modern housewife finds herself when engaged in shopping.

Thus an elderly woman of sustained artistic experience, with thirteen previous convictions of larceny to her credit, observed another woman out shopping with a perambulator containing her babe. She at once pricked up her ears because, like all women, she knew that perambulators from time immemorial have served the auxiliary purpose of shopping bags. Presently the woman stopped outside a shop, and, exactly as her observer anticipated, left her troublesome handbag in the perambulator in the charge of the babe. From here it was speedily removed, and was found to contain thirty-four shillings.

On this occasion its purloiner was unfortunately caught, but this must not be taken to be any adverse criticism on her methods. Every artist knows perfectly well the average rainfall of a year has to be weathered, and, like other sensible persons, counts upon making hay while the sun shines.

Another woman in the early autumn of life was finely described by a detective sergeant at the London Sessions as one 'who persistently goes to big stores and follows ladies from department to

department until at the first available opportunity she can steal their handbags.' She had 11 previous convictions, 7 of which were for handbag stealing. Her awards included a sentence of 3 years' penal servitude, and she now retired for another 21 months' hard labour, her defeat on this occasion being at Messrs. Swan and Edgar's.

Bag-snatching by men seems usually to be carried out by less refined means and to border more or less on simple highway robbery. One young man, however, displayed a certain ingenuity in performing his acts of depredation on foggy nights, it being his notion that the possessors of the handbags would be unable to identify his features. This was quite a sensible thought on his part. He overlooked, however, the fact that the police rely more upon 'information received' than upon identification parades. Thus the contents of the bag were found in his possession, some 'own familiar friend' having kindly told the police where to find him.

Of thefts from waiting cars it is unnecessary to speak, save that this branch of robbery has provided the police with the phrase of 'peering into cars,' a habit which, according to them, is the chief occupation of those persons who loiter near car parks.

There only remains to be mentioned those who make it their business to augment their incomes or to earn a livelihood by robbing their employers or their hosts.

Among the former rank first and foremost those

who are responsible for the disappearance of postal packets containing valuables and notes. Such public servants become crooks proper when what may have been a solitary act of pillage becomes an habitual practice, or in cases where they join the postal service as temporary extra workers, apparently with felonious intent.

Not a great while ago a Recorder of Borough Quarter Sessions had before him two men charged with stealing postal orders. One of the defendants asked for five other offences to be taken into consideration, and both admitted previous convictions.

On hearing this, the Recorder is reported to have remarked: "You have both been convicted before, and yet you are employed by the Post Office authorities to deal with thousands upon thousands of letters and packages belonging to the public. I think the Post Office authorities are very much to blame in employing convicted thieves without inquiring into their past records."

In defence the Postal Authorities pointed out that temporary postmen were supplied through the Labour Exchanges, and that every precaution was taken to guard against the engagement of unsuitable employees.

On the case coming to the attention of the Ministry of Labour, an official was reported to have said: "Every man who wants Post Office employment must provide four references, two at least from previous employers. Two of these references are verified both by the Ministry and by the Post

Office authorities. If a man gives names of people who write erroneous references for him, we are powerless. We deal with millions of men, and it would be impossible to find out if each man had or had not a criminal record. In the case of the Post Office the man must be clever or we should catch him, but if he is sufficiently clever he might hoodwink us."

Crooks will take renewed courage from these closing remarks, while the general public who reads the daily police news will gradually realize what a lot of clever postmen there must be. Meanwhile one ventures again to express the belief that if in place of four references the candidate had his finger-prints tested, it might be a more convincing proof of his suitability for the work contemplated.

Another temporary postman, after eleven months' service at £1 13s. 7d. for 30 hours' work a week, was charged with stealing three postal packages containing postal orders.

The attention of his superiors had been aroused by the large number of letters that were disappearing, and, suspicion falling upon him, a letter was placed among those of his delivery round directed to an address which was not on that delivery, and in this letter were placed three postal orders valued at £2 5s. It was his duty when he discovered this letter to have thrown it out as a miss-sort, but instead he merely threw away the envelope and the next day cashed the postal orders.

In his case also there were previous convictions, three in number.

Next may be mentioned the case of a sorter at a West End District Post Office who had been in the postal service for twenty years, and was receiving a salary of £4 16s. 6d. a week. Here again letters began to disappear, and it was finally discovered one day that he had opened nine mail bags but had only accounted for eight. On being searched there were found in his pocket five registered letters containing money, all of which had been in the ninth mail bag, and also a postal order that had been taken from another mail bag three weeks earlier. On these two charges he stood his trial, it not being assumed that he had any part in seven other similar thefts which had taken place. He was sentenced to three years' penal servitude. He exemplifies the artist who, without previous experience of Crookdom, develops from within the confines of a legitimate employment.

On another occasion, in an East End post office, a postal servant most unfortunately lifted up a magazine which his superior who was in charge of the office had been reading in the retiring-room, only to find underneath it 27 £1 notes. A diamond ring worth the same sum of money was discovered in a box of dominoes near at hand.

A sinister feature in the trial of this man was that he offered to give certain information to the



police, information which all crooks will be relieved to hear was not considered to be of any practical value.

He received 21 months in the second division.

Nearly allied to the post office crooks are those who find scope for their genius within the service of the railway companies. Thus a guard on the Southern Railway abstracted from a mail bag in his van two postal packets, one containing 24 American one-dollar notes, and the other containing 20 Canadian notes for 25 dollars. He then erased the reference to these two registered packets on the letter bill accompanying the mail. At a certain station this mail bag would normally have been transferred to a train bound for Southampton, but on this occasion, unknown to the guard, it was held back and secretly examined. At once the theft was discovered, as also the erasure on the letter bill, a copy of which had been kept by the senders, who had staged this ruse.

On the arrival of the guard's train at London, police officers searched his van, finding the remains of one of the envelopes, while the notes were discovered under the cushion on the guard's seat.

The authorities had become suspicious, it would seem, owing to the fact that during the past few years postal packets containing between them £1,829 had disappeared from trains on which this man had been the guard. He had been earning a weekly salary of £3 15s., and had 40 years' service

to his credit. He was sentenced to 3 years' penal servitude.

Although public servants who systematically augment their incomes by crooked means are without doubt entitled to be called crooks within the meaning of these pages, yet they are not so regarded by the criminal world proper, in the eyes of which, as in those of the rest of society, they figure merely as dishonest and treacherous employees. They are, however, useful to the crook proper in the carrying out of his schemes, as are also those private servants or domestics who are willing to betray the trust reposed in them.

A story told by Mr. Gordon, who in his professional days was approached one evening by a dishonest valet, is worth repeating at this point, both as an illustration of robbery by a private employee and as an example of the feelings of a *bona fide* crook upon the matter.

“‘I remember,’ he writes, ‘some years ago being approached by a valet who by some means or another had discovered the fact that I was a grafter.

“‘After cautiously ‘sounding me out’—all of which I was perfectly aware of, and wondering what was to come—he inquired of me whether I was acquainted with a ‘fence.’

“‘My reply being in the affirmative, he requested me to give him an introduction.

“‘‘Good gracious,’ I replied, ‘I dare not

do anything like that! Besides, I don't know you. You might be a "nark" for all I'm aware of.'

'“No, no,’ he said, ‘I'm nothing like that! The fact is, I've got a quantity of jewellery that I pinched from my governor's house last night and I want to get rid of it. I dare not pawn it and I don't know a fence.’

'“The only excuse I can offer for my subsequent action lies in the fact that I was a grafter and that he was not ‘one of us.’ ‘He's sent to me straight from the clouds,’ thought I.

'“‘Look here,’ I said, addressing him, ‘I know of a “fence” close by here to whom I could take your stuff. But it would be more than my existence is worth to introduce you to him in that capacity. I'll tell you what I can do, though. If you care to come with me and wait outside his place whilst I go in and sell it for you, I don't mind obliging you.’

'“‘Are you sure you can do it at a fair price?’ he inquired.

'“‘Undoubtedly,’ I replied.

'“‘There is a public-house situated in High Holborn named The Crown. In those days one could enter a door in Holborn, and by walking straight through the premises of the pub, find oneself at an exit debouching upon Shaftesbury Avenue. These double-exit premises are known to the grafters as ‘breaks’ or ‘throwers,’ and are

used by them for the purpose of 'shaking off a tail'—avoiding a fellow."'<sup>1</sup>

The valet was left waiting at the High Holborn entrance.

"Honour among thieves," Mr. Gordon adds, "does not apply to 'outsiders'."

Strictly speaking, no crook worthy of the name, should he practise a straight occupation, will behave otherwise than honourably within the limits of that occupation. In plain words, he will endeavour to do his jobs, be they straight or crooked, to the best of his ability, the only exception to this rule being those cases in which the straight occupation is deliberately undertaken as part of a crooked scheme, as, for example, when a crook valet enters domestic service simply and solely to rob his master or to give inside information to his confederates. Otherwise, when not engaged on professional duties, the crook may be as conventional in his behaviour as any other citizen.

Persons who continually let their friends and employers down are as a rule hopeless as criminals as well.

Our prisons are inhabited daily by large numbers of crook failures, persons who thoroughly deserved to be 'knocked off' for their lack of imagination and for their carelessness, to which may be added crook 'outsiders' like the postal servants, railway guards, dishonest domestics, and suchlike people

<sup>1</sup> *Crooks of the Underworld*, pp. 205-207.

whose claims to artistic merit are small and whose notions of business are deplorable.

It is with relief that we turn from the robber and the petty thief to the burglar and the house-breaker.

## THE ART OF THE SCREWSMAN

SCREWSMEN may be divided into the 'rough and ready' and the 'intelligent and thoughtful.'

It must be obvious to anyone who gives the matter the smallest consideration that an interesting afternoon or evening can be spent 'peering into' houses in order to see if they be occupied or not; and if there be reason to suppose the latter, it is but natural to ring the bell so as to make quite sure.

Satisfied on this point, the screwsmen may decide to have a look at the inside of the house as well, for which purpose he will glance first of all up and down the road to see that all is clear, after which an entrance will be made by some convenient door or window, preferably at the rear of the building.

Once inside he will approach the front door, either to admit a partner, or in any case to put up the chain if there be one, for then if the householder should chance to return in the midst of his operations, a warning will be given and there should be time to make a hasty exit at the rear.

As such a return may happen at any moment in a rough and ready job of this sort, a somewhat rapid 'turn over' of the rooms may be necessary, after a preliminary search has been made for a

convenient-sized suitcase, in which hastily to pack whatever it may be decided to take.

It goes without saying that the primary quest will be for jewellery, watches, and money, and after that for clothes, boots and shoes, cameras, opera-glasses, or any *objets d'art* that the house may contain.

At length, and assuming there have been no untoward interruptions, the screwsman will leave quietly and confidently by the front door, endeavouring to look as much as possible like a visitor departing to the station with his portmanteau. For that reason, therefore, he will have taken care to be dressed neatly.

The only accessories he needs for his work are a reliable jemmy, a screwdriver, a gimlet, a small torch, and a pair of gloves—for the science of finger-prints is not to be despised. He may likewise carry an umbrella, for there is something extraordinarily respectable about an umbrella.

If by any chance when he rings the bell of the house it should turn out to be occupied, he can either ask whoever opens the door whether Mr. So-and-So (who he has taken care previously to find out lives some doors off) lives there, or he can present a card he has had printed advertising some imaginary firm of boot repairers, leaving this with the occupant.

This rough and ready form of housebreaking or, if it be after 9 p.m., burglary, is usually spoken of as 'drumming.' It constitutes the most elementary

form of the art, and it is practised on a very large scale with widely varying success.

Once he has got safely away from the house with his portmanteau, the screwsmen will probably hasten home to the room he uses when on business, or to the house of some friend who is prepared to run the risk of receiving the 'stuff,' at any rate for the night, or until such time as the screwsmen can take it to his 'buyer.'

As a rule he will want to look it carefully over, first in order to decide what is of negotiable value, and what, if he lives anywhere near the river, had better be 'given a drink.'

He may perhaps wish to make use of some of the 'stuff' himself (which is most unwise), in which case slight alterations may be immediately necessary, such as the elimination of the initials on valises, the names of makers on shoes, laundry marks, tailors' names—anything which can connect the present owner with the last one. Then, when all this is done, he will consider how much is to be taken to the 'buyer' and how much, if any, it may be safe to pawn.

Finally, having realized the stuff and received his cash, he will, if he belong to the rough and ready class, proclaim to all his friends, and especially his lady friends, that he is in funds, and the word will go round the cafés and coffee-stalls that "Bill has had it off last night" until the detectives of the locality are likewise echoing the refrain, "Bill has had it off last night."



If after all this Bill is soon 'knocked off' as a suspect, it must be because, as Emerson remarked, "All Nature blabs."

But it is really 'Bill' who blabs himself, as, if he were an intelligent and thoughtful screwsman, he would never let a soul know that he had 'had it off' at all.

'Bill,' however, is 'rough and ready.' And the result is that Bill becomes an 'in and out boy' until he learns common sense, or decides that when all is said and done he has not the makings of a good crook and had better retire into Respectability.

A little more ingenuity was displayed recently by a young man who went about 'drumming' with a woman as his partner: his notion evidently being that a woman is even more respectable than an umbrella. And it is very seldom that passers-by assume that a man and a woman, if discovered loitering, are loitering for the purposes of housebreaking.

The fact that on one occasion this young hopeful broke down was due to a piece of outrageous bad luck. Accompanied by his Dulcinea, he cited a likely house in a quiet, respectable road in the suburbs, remarking casually to his companion, "This place looks dead. I have a great mind to do it."

He then rang the bell, and, obtaining no answer and tempted by the glazed panel of the front door, he broke the glass, unfastened the catch, and at once proceeded upstairs, where very much to his astonishment he found the whole family in residence.

He came downstairs again very rapidly, pursued by the master of the house, but contrived to escape. His companion was less fortunate, having the humiliation of being caught by the lady.

Eventually both stood in the dock of the London Sessions, for the young man was 'wanted' for another little day's work, the proceeds of which had been a bicycle and a suitcase, and it was obvious he did not possess the requisite self-control to avoid his searchers.

He had four previous convictions for house-breaking, while his companion was well known as a persistent associate of screwsmen. Her sentence was postponed to the next Sessions, but he received three years' penal servitude.

Intelligence begins to manifest its presence in the screwsmen's art when those who meditate 'doing a job' are conversant in advance with the 'lie of the land' or the 'lay out.'

A young screwsmen well known to the author came to the conclusion that it might be quite a good idea to carry out a systematic pillage of his native country town, descending upon it from the Metropolis at intervals by motor coach. He reckoned that his intimate knowledge of the locality, its highways, and byways, would be invaluable to any working partner, while his awareness of the habits of his fellow-townfolk and the whereabouts of their houses would, he considered, make his visits a practical business proposition.

He was very fairly successful, numbering among

his coups the Co-operative Stores, the Picture Palace, and a very satisfactory dwelling-house. He came to grief, however, for two main reasons. He had a contempt for finger-prints, which, as it turned out ultimately, was entirely unjustified, for they constituted the sole evidence against him at his trial. Even then he might have prolonged his liberty indefinitely had he not found an attraction in that quarter of London known as "The Cross," a locality which though small in compass and comprising little else than Villiers Street and its environs, exercises a lure of the most uncanny kind upon the youth of Crookdom.

Like the mysterious island in *Mary Rose*, 'The Cross' likes to be visited. It calls to its children in a subtle way. And one by one they return to its cafés, its coffee-stalls, its billiard hall, its taverns, its gardens, and its Underground Station, unable to resist its lure.

It is a friendly locality in a queer, sinister way. Perhaps every one of its children is a little afraid of it because human nature is always half-scared of the eerie and supernatural, and there is something 'uncanny' about 'The Cross.'

One repeats, it is the lure of the island in Barrie's play, 'It likes to be visited,' and its visitors disappear from it, suddenly. And yet this did not deter my friend of 'Co-operative' fame from answering the voice of 'The Cross.' With the full knowledge that there was a warrant out for him, he reappeared nightly in Villiers Street, until one

evening there came the tap on the shoulder and the timeless voice saying, "You answer to the description of a man named——"

And this was followed by a lot of running about in the streets of the magic territory, but it ended as it always ends in the Charge Room at Bow Street.

For there is a subtle connection between the crooked side of Villiers Street and the straight side of Bow Street.

The advent of the motor-car and the facilities for rapid transit it offers has naturally enough greatly popularized the 'smash and grab' raids on the premises of jewellers, costumiers, and furriers, experience having shown that it is comparatively easy to bring off these jobs in broad daylight and to get away safely with the proceeds.

Thus quite recently there drove up to a jeweller's shop outside Victoria Station a saloon car driven by a chauffeur. Out of it stepped a gentleman dressed in plus fours, who, for a few moments, gazed in the jeweller's window, while the car waited with the engine running.

Suddenly the gentleman produced a small mallet, smashed the window, and made a grab at a pad of rings, but was unable to wrench this away owing to its being fixed in a manner creditable to the jeweller. He managed to get one diamond ring, but even this he dropped in the street during the hurry of his departure.

He recovered his reputation, apparently, a few days later in the suburbs, where, arriving outside

a shop in a similar manner, he made away with £200 worth of jewellery.

Jobs of this kind need a great deal of courage, and are by no means necessarily the haphazard pieces of work they may appear to be to those who see them in action. As ever, the better the crook the more careful the study of the 'lay out.'

A very curious story as to how an ordinary member of the British Public, a young hotel waiter, became involuntarily involved in a 'smash and grab' raid was told not long ago at the Middlesex Sessions.

This young man encountered a friend near Victoria Station who was driving a moderate-sized car. He asked him to give him a lift, as he wanted to get to his home at Clapham. The friend consented, but on getting into the car he found to his surprise that four other men were already in it.

The car then set off, but not on the direct route for Clapham, for it stopped eventually outside a coffee-stall at Hendon. Here the four men got out, ostensibly to get some coffee, while the young waiter remained in the car and his friend at the driver's seat with the engine running.

Suddenly there was a great turmoil at the coffee-stall, and back to the car rushed the four men, by no means empty-handed, for they threw into the car a large quantity of cigarettes as they hastily took their places.

Off went the car again at a great pace, which became yet greater when it was observed that

another car was in pursuit, which, as it turned out, had been hastily requisitioned by a chauffeur who had witnessed the incident at the coffee-stall. This latter car had also managed during the pursuit to give a lift to a policeman.

Faced with this most unsought-for and embarrassing situation, the young waiter performed the wholly remarkable feat of jumping out of the first car, as a result of which he was picked up by the second one and taken to Willesden Police Station, where three stitches were put in his head by a considerate surgeon.

Ultimately he appeared in the dock of the Middlesex Sessions with his friend the driver and a young woman who had received the cigarettes.

He was acquitted. His friend got 9 months' hard labour, and the young woman 3 months' hard labour.

The four just men escaped.

Without doubt if robbers in a car find themselves chased by the police, nothing can be more sensible than for one of them to make a vicarious sacrifice of his body by flinging it into the roadway in front of the pursuers' car.

A police car in full pursuit was held up in this manner one day by an enterprising gang of robbers who had the perspicacity to throw out of their car the dummy figure of a woman.

Very naturally the police car stopped and it was taken into custody.

And there the matter ended.

Of all branches of housebreaking, the 'smash and grab' raids are certainly the most productive of exhilarating thrills. Next to a really good fire and plenty of fire-engines, nothing causes more welcome excitement to shoppers.

Next to the car, the motor-van has proved to be of great practical value, the general public as a rule paying very little attention to stationary vans.

Thus it was a pure chance that led to the interruption of the operations of warehouse-breakers who were quietly engaged recently in the slow removal of a quarter of a million cigarettes from a wholesale premises.

Sixty thousand cigarettes were already in the van, when suspicions were aroused, and the two screwsmen concerned in the job were apprehended, though not immediately, for one escaped and might have escaped altogether had he not been so incredibly foolish as to leave not merely his coat in the van, but a club membership card bearing his name in one of its pockets.

But as a rule, as we have said, furniture vans inspire confidence, so much so indeed that some crooks were able to spend an entire day removing the total contents of a house, and no one detected anything amiss until the owners returned from a holiday abroad to find their house absolutely empty.

Furniture vans have, however, been used by Scotland Yard to convey a posse of police to the scene of a contemplated raid. Thus they are essentially things of neutral worth.

Another branch of the screwsmen's art is that exemplified by the 'cat' burglar.

If a man be a good athlete he may decide to go 'at the climb', to enter houses, that is to say, by way of the porch or drainpipe rather than by the lower floors. Upper windows are often open, and the hour of 7.30 p.m. is a very good time to see whether the lady of the house has or has not left part of her jewellery on her dressing-table.

A friend of mine for whom I entertained a deep respect, made it his hobby occasionally to enter bedrooms in this manner. On one such evening he had scarcely got into the bedroom before he heard footsteps approaching the door. Being unwilling immediately to descend once more the drainpipe, he rolled himself beneath the bed, only to discover that there was a large box under it which, in order to make room for himself at one side, he was compelled slightly to push out at the other.

Scarcely was he in position before a maidservant entered the room, coming straight over to the bed to turn down the sheet. Most fortunately she approached his side of the bed first, as when she reached the other, discovering that the box was protruding, she pushed it back, and he was obliged to roll out and give it place.

She then turned out the light and went downstairs. His next move was to turn it on again and lock the door. That done, he made a careful survey of the dressing-table and its contents, and after remunerating himself handsomely for his



evening's work, he slowly descended to earth again.

After a job in London he would go at the first opportunity to a provincial city where his 'buyer' lived a life of outward respectability as a well-to-do jeweller. Then, supplied with ready money for some weeks to come, he would live quietly at a good hotel the life of a refined gentleman of leisure, until it became necessary to do a little more work for his living.

He was a most charming and trustworthy companion.

Another highly specialized branch of burglary is safe-breaking, for which, it is needless to say, special tools are requisite unless it be decided to use explosives, in which case the results may surpass in magnitude the expectation of their producer.

An experienced crook who had stored at his house 11 lb. of explosives and 30 detonators set forth one evening to blow open a safe at a gramophone warehouse, which he did quite successfully, obtaining £45 as a reward.

But as a result of his explosive operations, he blew out twelve windows and shifted quite a lot of furniture, and when arrested was found to have on his person sufficient gelignite to have blown the whole works down.

The Judge described him, perhaps not without reason, as "a dangerous man" and as "a danger to life and property," especially in view of the fact that he specialized in this branch of

burglary. He was sentenced to three years' penal servitude.

It may be he realized, as do many high-class burglars, that a large amount of noise can be safely made without any fear of interruption from the occupants inside or outside a building.

Still, one imagines that the sudden blasting of twelve windows and the dispersal of several gramophones is a sound to which the modern civilized ear has not yet become dulled through familiarity.

But to turn from the safe-blower to the burglar proper who is not 'at the climb,' but who sets about his profession in the good old-fashioned way and who in courage and possibly in general character should be carefully distinguished from the daylight housebreaker.

From the standpoint of this painstaking artist, wealthy people are continually earning a debt of gratitude for their tireless propensity for collecting together within the limits of their houses treasure troves of jewellery and *objets d'art*, the whole science of burglary consisting in the planning of how best to carry off the 'swag' after carefully inspecting it at the dead of night and to convert it into cash value.

Newspaper accounts of these exciting raids on property are generally very misleading, for they are obviously based on local gossip, no one except the burglars themselves knowing the actual sequence of events, while books written by burglars of standing are few and far between; indeed, the only pre-

eminent books of memoirs of this kind that hold a place of honour in my book-case are those given to the public by Mr. 'George Ingram' (with the editorial assistance of Mr. de Witt Mackenzie) and by his partner Mr. George Smithson.

Both of these ex-burglars have written accounts<sup>1</sup> of the same series of country-house jobs, and though Mr. Smithson is not very complimentary to Mr. 'Ingram,' both books corroborate each other in their details, and should be read in conjunction with each other by those whose desire it may be to comprehend the limits and possibilities of the screwsman's profession.

If in the compilation of my present book I have made unconscious thefts from the literary household of Mr. 'Ingram,' he will, I am sure, be the first to perceive the poetic justice of the transaction.

But I must now, for the benefit of the reader, make some conscious borrowings from this excellent classic of crime, for Mr. 'Ingram' speaks on many matters with authority and not as the scribes, whilst in so doing he endorses the opinions which must of necessity force themselves upon the mind of anyone who has any intimate knowledge of the life of the Underworld in great cities.

Being a well-educated man of keen observation, this author perceived throughout his career the wisdom of giving the underworld, with its joints and cafés, and its convivial life of fraternity; a wide

<sup>1</sup> *Hell's Kitchen*, by De Witt Mackenzie (Herbert Jenkins); *Raffles in Real Life*, by George Smithson (Hutchinson).

berth, save when it became necessary to descend into it for the express purposes of business.

For, as in the hunting world, so in Crookdom, it is necessary to arrange 'meets' before setting forth on any undertaking. And these 'meets' usually take place in some convenient tavern or café patronized by the members of any particular clique of crooks, just as the members of the 'Cross' clique tend to look out for each other of an evening in some favoured café or coffee-stall, and this, despite the danger of flocking together in this manner. But it is part and parcel of the crook's nature to herd with his spiritual kith and kin, which, after all, is nothing very unusual, for what are the big West End clubs but refined and glorified examples of the same tendency on the part of the human bird of all sorts—to flock together in its hours of leisure with those of its own mental species?

Even spinster ladies and widows of a certain disposition tend to congregate daily in their parish churches, in response to a similar calling.

Such little 'meets' give them an inward rehabilitation, and it is the same with the crook, whose church is his chosen café. And sometimes he finds that the keeper of the café, like the vicar of the church, has a greater respect for the Law and the Police than the fortunes of the individual suppliant, should there be a warrant out for his arrest, or should information be sought by those who are about to apply for its issue.

With a wisdom therefore that must be very excep-

tional, Mr. Ingram decided not to lead a club life or to be a regular member of any of these little local congregations, save when he wanted to find a friend of the same persuasion in order to discuss some approaching venture of faith.

He lived in the country, taking a furnished cottage 'way out among the hills,' for he writes, "My Scotch canniness told me that the farther away I was from the police, the better off I would be. Also, I always was attracted by country life. I enjoyed the quiet and I liked to be able to get out for tramps across the green hills when I was not professionally engaged."

Speaking on the preliminaries of burglary, he writes:

'The first requisite is a "stick" or "cane"—or call it a 'jemmy' if you will, which is just an ordinary cold chisel bent at the end. The jemmy, of course, is used for prising open windows and doors or anything else which needs a lever. The jemmy may be long or short. If it is short, one generally puts a piece of large gas-piping over the end of it to get extra leverage. Then we have the ubiquitous screwdriver; a chisel for cutting woodwork; a brace and bit or a gimlet, and if one is "posh" and wants to do the thing in style, a glazier's knife and a glass-cutter. These are pretty well all the tools required by the average burglar.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hell's Kitchen*, p. 126.

So much for the outfit. And now where are they to be purchased?

‘Usually the burglar gets his tools piecemeal from stalls and second-hand tool dealers. There is a certain amount of reason in this piecemeal buying, because there is less chance of arousing suspicion than if one buys all his tools in a single establishment.’<sup>1</sup>

Thoroughly equipped in this manner and by such means, the next step in burglary is to decide what is to be done and where one shall do it. And it is at this point that the screwsman of intelligence at once distinguishes himself from the exemplifier of the tactics of the ‘rough and ready.’

Belonging very emphatically to the former category, Mr. Ingram and his working partner used to study the social columns of *The Times* in order to discover which of the ‘landed gentry’ were going into residence at their country mansions, after which they would look up these families in *Debrett’s* or *Burke’s*, to see if it were really worth their while to visit these country mansions at the same time as their owners. And if they decided it was worth while, then they took out their motor maps and made a careful study of the surrounding country.

They then set to work, nor can I do better than recommend the reader who wishes to know how

<sup>1</sup> *Hell’s Kitchen*, p. 126.

“quite a large proportion of the peerage of this country was affected in one way or another by the burglaries”<sup>1</sup> to purchase for himself and peruse at leisure this most excellent primer on the art.

In the opinion of Mr. Smithson the best way to approach a country mansion for the purpose of burglary is by train and by bicycle, the homely and inoffensive ‘push bike’ attracting far less attention than the motor-car or motor-cycle in the early hours of dawn.

Having selected a country house or a batch of houses in close proximity to each other, he would either alone or in the company of his partner take the train from London to the nearest wayside station from where he would set off on his bicycle to the lodge gates of the appointed Park, the only danger up to this point being that on arrival at the railway station he might have been the sole passenger to alight from the train, and being a stranger would naturally have attracted the attention of the ticket collector.

Such disadvantages have to be borne in mind, for in the eyes of the burglar everyone whom he meets while on business is a potential witness for the prosecution.

On reaching the lodge gates of the mansion about 11.0 p.m., and finding them as a rule open, he would boldly ride in, depositing his bicycle presently in some convenient shrubbery. He would then wait for the lights in the house to be extinguished,

<sup>1</sup> *Hell's Kitchen*, p. 171.

after which he would make a careful survey of the lower windows with a view to determining the most convenient means of entry.

Windows that can be opened by inserting a putty knife and pushing back the catch present small difficulties. Others require a jemmy, and some, in order to save time, may be broken with the usual precautions of a piece of brown paper smeared over with seccotine and one's overcoat to catch the falling pieces of glass. The glass, however, may fall inwards, in which case a very sensational noise is the result. It is, however a consolation to burglars to discover the amount of noise which can be made in a large house without any fear of disturbing the sleep of its occupants.

Once inside, the business of the evening commences, which consists in going slowly through all the important rooms, inspecting and collecting their treasures, examining the contents of bureaux, cabinets, safes, and deed boxes, and finally packing the loot. One has until about 5.0 a.m. to do the work.

On the whole, dogs are reported to be friendly and manageable, and it has been found by experience that burglar alarm bells seldom wake the household.

On departing, the same dangers lurk at some railway stations in catching the first train up to Town as attend an arrival by the last train, especially if by any chance one may be sufficiently distinguished as to be 'wanted' all over the country.



If one has reason to suppose that one's departure by train has attracted the attention of a local police officer, and that he may have telephoned his suspicions in advance, then it is better at any cost to throw all incriminating evidence by degrees out of the window before one arrives at the Metropolis.

After the night is over, the next step in the game of burglary is to approach the 'buyer,' so as to convert the proceeds into cash as speedily as possible, whilst getting rid of the incriminating evidence.

When we said in the introduction to this book that the 'screwsman' performs a task for which there exists no popular demand, we should strictly have said no legitimate demand, for, as Judges on the bench are never tired of saying, "There would be no burglars if there were no 'fences.'" There is most certainly therefore a demand for stolen goods on the part of those, pawnbrokers, publicans, and other persons both inside and outside trade, who are anxious at all times to buy goods at bargain prices and to resell them at great profit to themselves.

That 'buyers' are not a very popular class in the crook world can easily be imagined. They have the whip-hand on the screwsman, and that in a way most unpleasant to this under-dog, for it is an undeniable fact that it is much easier for a 'buyer' to 'shop' (betray to the police) a screwsman than for a screwsman to 'shop' a 'buyer.' All that a 'buyer' has got to do is to decline business and

inform the police of the attempt of his would-be customer to seduce him with an illicit deal.

Thus a 'code of honour' is an absolute necessity in this branch of the profession if anyone is to feel reasonably safe. The 'buyer' does not want to lose his customers, and the screwsmen want to be sure of his 'buyer.' And on the whole matters work out fairly well; but the fact remains that a 'buyer' can be a 'nark' (informer to the police) with comparative safety to himself. And this possibility can never be lost sight of by his customers, nor the additional fact that it may be to the advantage of the police to protect the sources of their information from undue interference.

Without doubt, in having dealings with a 'buyer' it is as well for the crook to have an equal knowledge of the value of the 'stuff' he is offering; for if he asks either an absurdly high price or a ridiculously low one, it is natural for the 'buyer' to form his own opinion of the intelligence of his customer. Thus, as every crook cannot be a connoisseur, it is best for him to have a partner somewhere who is, as otherwise he will lose much of the fruits of his nocturnal labours.

Occasionally a 'buyer' himself is hoodwinked. I knew a young man who stole a valuable microscope, and thinking the pawnbroker might not be too wide awake he replaced the lenses with ordinary glass. As he expected, he got his full value for the instrument, the dealer being unacquainted with such articles and being obliged therefore to

consult a catalogue to ascertain its worth. My friend then sold the lenses to a reputable firm in the City. A most hopeful young man!

'Buyers' may also find it to be well worth their while to help their customers in financing their defence if on trial, or to set them on their feet on their subsequent release from prison, it being foolish to lose a good customer by hurting his feelings, especially if one can be fairly sure of deducting the loan advanced from the next piece of business.

If in ordinary business, the 'buyer' has a capital defence if he enters the transaction with his customers in his books, pleading, in the event of trouble arising, that the entries are the best proof that he had no knowledge that the goods purchased were stolen property.

Altogether it is far more profitable to be a 'buyer' than a 'seller,' and the chances of arrest are very small.

In the case of the burglar, however, it is otherwise, and surely nothing can be more depressing at first sight than the following observation made by Mr. Ingram on his 147th page, in reference to his arrest:

'It was at the "Yard" that I first realized in full what we really had been up against.. The size and perfection of the organization that we had been trying to outwit made me stand aghast. I saw then that our ultimate arrest had been inevitable.

I also realized that it was a feather in our caps to have eluded the police for such a long period as we did.'

Praise where praise is due.

The full force of this crushing discovery on the part of Mr. Ingram may be partially parried by some remarks let fall by ex-Chief Constable Wensley in the second chapter of his fascinating memoirs.

'I have seen the investigation of crime become more highly organized and every scientific and mechanical aid that the wit of man can devise placed at the service of the detective. This is as it should be, for the circumstances of crime have changed although crime itself has not.

'There is, perhaps, a danger in one way of overestimating the value of these things. In truth, all the mechanical ingenuity in the world will never stamp the criminal out.'

We are glad to be able to quote these comfortable words to those of our readers who may entertain any fears lest the crook proper should one day "swallow the anchor" and retire permanently from the stage.

Does man ever surrender to new obstacles? Does he not rather invent new methods for surmounting them?

The crook of Yesterday and his counterpart of To-Day may fade into nothingness in so far as their

methods no longer pay. But the crook of To-Morrow is always in the making, for hope springs eternal in the human breast, and it is always the hope of a reliable number of young persons that they may escape a life of humdrum toil and discipline and acquire sufficient capital to be their own masters—by taking up crime as a profession. Such is the faith of Crookdom. And such is its lasting ambition.

‘In the morning it is green, and groweth up: but in the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered.’





